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YOUR NEW ORLEANS ALTERNATIVE TO CULTURE

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Back cover: Kali and her cubs Nandi, Tatu, and Zawadi make their public debut at the Audubon Zoo on February 7. (photo by Steven Hatley)

Because I've been around a minute, people sometimes ask me if "the scene" down here in New Orleans is better now or then—then being way back in the early '90s when I was just a wee lad buying my first Born Against records. And by nearly every metric, I'd say the scene is way better now (except that *back then* we never used words like "metrics"). There are so many things that the indie/counterculture/youth culture/what-have-you scenes in New Orleans have now that were in extremely short supply back then. It might be hard to appreciate for anyone growing up in the past 20 years how many *good* record stores there currently are, with deep, varied inventory and friendly staff. *Back then* New Orleans was limited to maybe one decent record store like Underground Sounds (Hi Laura!) and a handful of spots that would gouge you for the world's shittiest copy of *Abbey Road* while blowing cigarette smoke in your face. Nowadays, local bands of many genres abound, and a lot of y'all go on tour—practically unheard of 30 years ago. I'm also happy to see the scenes have evolved since the '90s to be much more inclusive and representative of people who are not angry young white men. And if both eras share one thing—especially here—it's that creativity flourishes.

But here it comes, my one old man gripe. Indulge me, please. One thing I miss about the pre-internet dark ages is that *back then*, if you were into any kind of subculture, you really had to work to be a part of it. Your scene wasn't just served up as thousands of fully-formed choices at your fingertips. If there was a band I was obsessed with, like Born Against, I usually had to order their records from an ad in *MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL*, which meant I had to find a copy of *MRR*—not the easiest thing to do at the time either. One time, I rode my bike to this guy's house (he lived in Carrollton like me) who ran a mailorder out of it, just so I could save a little time and a few bucks on postage for some records I wanted to buy. Looking back, I realize that was a crazy thing to do, and put the guy in a weird situation with some punk high school kid showing up like

that (shout out One-Way Distro, and sorry Ed!). My point is that seeking out those records like they were far-away treasure, going to Underground Sounds because that's where you'd see the flyer for a cool show, getting to the show, sometimes at another random dude's apartment (Hi Carl!)—that all took a lot of time, searching, and planning. And for many people, that was a big part of the charm: this shared sense of jumping through hoops and crawling around proverbial tunnels and literal back-alleys to arrive at this place together—one reason we call it *the underground* in the first place. I'm not saying those bonds aren't forged today in dark clubs with loud music—I know they are and the pages of *ANTIGRAVITY* are fuller because of that. And *back then* we didn't have an *ANTIGRAVITY*, so score another point for our current times!

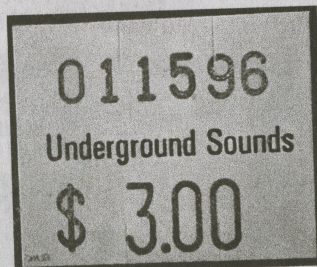
I'll fast forward past 10,000 words on the internet and social media, which has done wonders for *underground* subcultures and also cursed them, and arrive right to the current evil, which is AI. It sucks that we have to keep circling back to this topic month after month, so I'll spare you the full diatribe and simply offer the following: If you're a venue, band, artist, writer, designer, whatever, who finds themselves operating in independent art spaces and subcultures—or you just consider yourself part of a community of freaks and weirdos, wingnuts, and free spirits—*stop fucking using AI*. Not only is it tacky as hell, it makes you look lazy—like you really don't give a shit about any of this. And if there's one thing that unites all of these little scenes, it's the communal care, labor, time, resource, love—*dedication*—that goes into them. Let's please keep that flame alive, where artist and audience can look at each other and both know we earned this. —Dan Fox

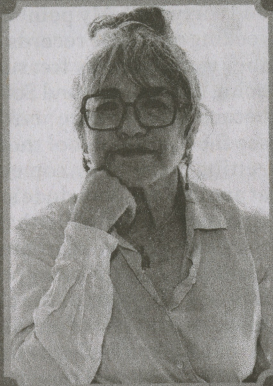


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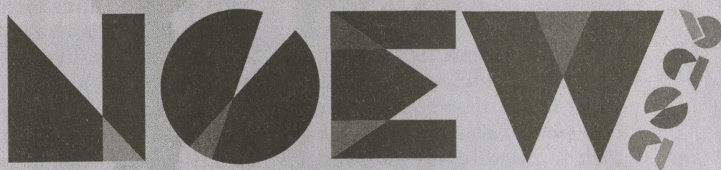
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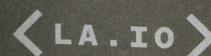
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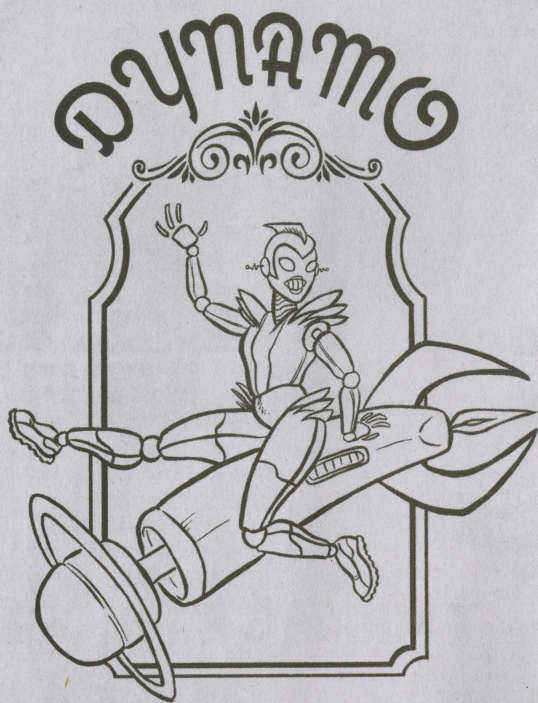
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WILD WAVES

by Taylor Balkissoon

The arrival of Pisces season has the potential to soothe our nervous systems and bolster our vitality. The spring equinox occurs on the 20th and has been celebrated across many different cultures for millennia, operating as a yearly moment where cultural ideas around renewal coalesce. This moment marks the transition between Pisces and Aries seasons, and the astrological new year in Western astrology. We have been working to release our pasts through the Gregorian New Year, the Lunar New Year, and now the Solar New Year, and with each release we create room to plant new seeds. The full moon Lunar eclipse in Virgo on the 3rd is its own cycle ending of sorts, as after this eclipse the north and south nodes will shift into Aquarius and Leo, respectively. For the last year and a half the nodes have been moving through Virgo and Pisces, activating fated lessons around practicality, spirituality, sacrifice, and purity. This final full moon eclipse will act as a capstone in regards to lessons about our health, our capacity for service, and self-abandonment. Venus, planet of love and feminine power, will shift out of Pisces and into fiery Aries on the 6th, and Jupiter will turn direct in Cancer on the 10th. The combined influence of these two cardinal signs will set the stage for us to take charge of our life force. The equinox and the eclipses will have global impacts, and the waves of these impacts will ripple against one another in an array of revolutionary action and reactionary oppression. Pisces and Virgo will rise to the occasion as strategic, empathetic leaders, and the arrival of Aries season on the 20th will kick things into high gear.

ARIES

Your position at the beginning of the zodiac comes with a great responsibility. When your season arrives, the Earth starts to come back to life, and this external experience is reflected in our spirits. Your capacity to inspire and persist is of utmost value right now, and the sun's transit through your 12th house until the 20th will prepare you to take on this role. This house concerns itself with karma and endings—let Pisces wash away last year's troubles and water the seeds of revolt that you wish to sow.

TAURUS

This month, Pisces' mutable water energy meets your fixed (perhaps dry) Earth energy in your 11th house of community and legacy. Much like the warm rains that nourish our hardened soil as spring emerges, slowly these two meet and create the circumstances for growth. Living this out will mean feeling your feelings and letting them soak in, which might not be the most comfortable experience. Trust it is for the greater good, and let those feelings inspire sustainable community work.

GEMINI

Last month your ruling planet Mercury went retrograde on the 26th, and this transit will continue through the majority of the month before ending on the spring equinox. This transit through watery Pisces in your 10th house could bring road blocks in your goals and career, but being redirected can be a blessing. The sun's transit here will illuminate outdated patterns of self-sabotage, and Pisces' influence will encourage going with the flow.

CANCER

Jupiter's continued transit through your sign and 1st house will have an amplified effect this Pisces season, as Jupiter is Pisces' ruling planet. Whatever plans you've been trying to get off the ground, the combined influence of Jupiter and the sun's transit through your 9th house of freedom and exploration will provide novel possibilities, if you are willing to peek outside of your shell.

LEO

One of the most potent effects that Mardi Gras has on our lives is the transmutation of grief,

and you might find that this season operates as an extension of that experience last month. The sun's transit through Pisces in your 8th house will unearth deeper layers of pain that need addressing, through the equinox on the 20th. The arrival of Aries season on this day will invigorate Leos who have been willing to sit with the darkness in order to truly appreciate the arrival of the light.

VIRGO

Your sister sign Pisces' rulership of your 7th house of relationships is likely a bit of a doozy each time you encounter it. As a Virgo, you are inclined toward precision, where Pisces prefers a softer, less logical approach. It could be wise to lean into your shared mutable nature this month, as romance and partnerships of any kind will demand a lot of your attention. Pisces season invites flow and release, and Mercury retrograde until the 20th will invite introspection before action.

LIBRA

When was the last time you embraced your rage? As a Libra, this uncomfy emotion is one that you prefer to avoid until absolutely necessary. However, this month your ruling planet Venus will leave Pisces for your fiery sister sign Aries on the 6th and begin its transit through your 7th house. If there are relationships you've been working too hard to heal, perhaps this is the month to let them go. Aries will teach you to cut cords rather than constantly mend them.

SCORPIO

You might find that Pisces has a cleansing influence on your life and energy, much like spring snowmelt deepening the Mississippi and stirring up the dormant swamps that surround us. Your fellow water sign will likely affect your romantic and creative lives most heavily.

SAGITTARIUS

When was the last time you truly slowed down? Your fiery nature moves through life quickly, and last month's energetic demands might have left you feeling drained. This month the sun's transit through your 4th house will invite you to embrace a more Piscean way of being, and focus

on home, family, and stability with grounding practices like meditation.

CAPRICORN

Venus will move into fellow cardinal sign Aries on the 6th, and will conjunct both Neptune and Saturn in your 4th house the following two days. Your ruling planet Saturn's relationship with Venus can be complex, and this combination of restriction and love might have you looking at your family's past and the patterns that you carry as a result, in hopes that you can become a better version of yourself.

AQUARIUS

The end of winter and the arrival of spring align with your 2nd and 3rd house being illuminated by the sun. Pisces rulership of your 2nd house encourages an intuitive approach to establishing and maintaining stability. Perhaps this month consider meditating before you make your schedule, or integrating affirmations into your everyday life.



PISCES

Happy You season, Pisces! Your free-flowing, ever-changing nature might not characteristically be called to leadership, and yet this month stepping into that role might feel inevitable. Your ruling planet Jupiter will turn direct in fellow water sign Cancer on the 10th, and this energy will supercharge your potential to heal yourself and others in service to the greater good. The new moon in your sign on the 18th is a good time to focus on your own healing and filling your own cup.



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TIPS FROM THERIOT

by Isabel Ryan Theriot

*Sweet weight,
in celebration of the woman I am
and of the soul of the woman I am
and of the central creature and its delight
I sing for you. I dare to live.
Hello, spirit. Hello, cup.
Fasten, cover. Cover that does contain.
Hello to the soil of the fields.
Welcome, roots.*

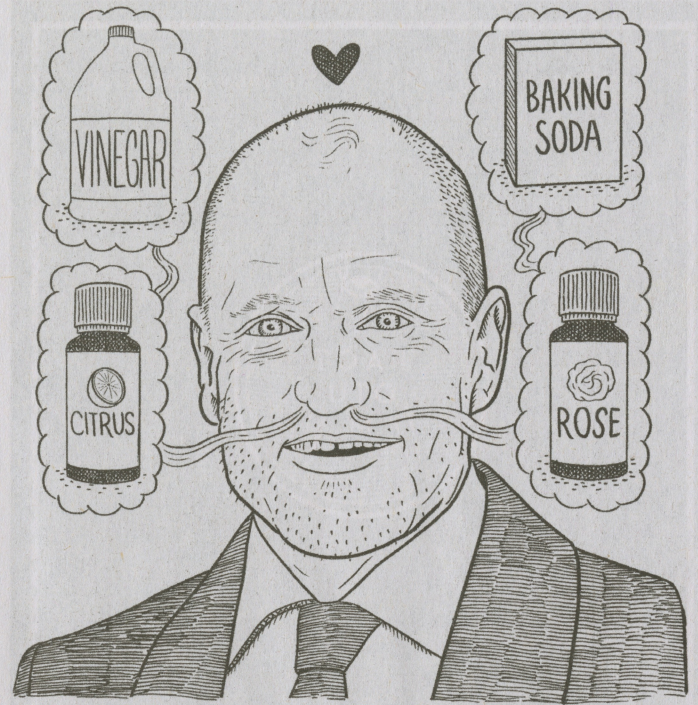
Howdy pardners! It's your old pal Izzy T here, excited to celebrate March, the month that ushers in Spring. I'm also jazzed to celebrate a day dedicated to honoring one of my favorite creations: women! On Sunday the 8th, International Women's Day, we shine a spotlight on, direct our gaze toward, and thank our lucky stars for the most vital gender with the splendor! No shade to men—I was raised by a single man, for heaven's sake. Having spent so much of my life in the presence of my (kind, nurturing, inspirational, and hilarious) father, I've always craved lady time. When I was thinking about my feelings about women and being a woman, the excerpt above from the poem, "In Celebration of My Uterus," by Anne Sexton kept popping into the old noggin. I'm fully aware that not all women have uteri. We come in many different shapes, innards, and outards, but I think that the poem encapsulates the quintessence of us: the sometimes heaviness of being, the innate and vital groundedness, and the creative tenacity that it requires to navigate the world. International Women's Day was conceived in 1909 by Theresa Malkiel, the head of the Socialist Party of America's Women's National Committee. IWD is now recognized as an official holiday in over 20 countries, asking all people to commit to "feminism that is intersectional, anti-racist, and trans-inclusive." So on March 8th, hug, high-five, and do your best Arsenio "woof woof woof" for the women in your life—and around the world for that matter. Now lemme give you some cleaning inspo!

How do I remove period blood stains from my clothes?

(originally printed in the October 2020 issue)

Ah, yes... menstruating. It's fun for so many reasons, not the least of which is dealing with blood stains on your clothing. It's especially annoying when this blood gets on a beautiful costume. It's time to stand up and fight against these stains! First off, treat the stain as soon as possible. Rinse under cold water while gently rubbing the fabric together. Cold water can get a lot of the stain out. Don't use hot water, though, as it will "cook" the stain into

the fabric. As you know, these blood "events" often happen at the worst times. With that said, you can use any soap that you have on hand at the time, depending on the fabric, to wash the garment. I often wash my underclothes while I'm in the bathtub with bath soap. If the blood is dried into light fabric, try soaking it in hydrogen peroxide first. For darker fabrics, you can crush up aspirin and mix it with water to make a paste. Smooth the paste over the stain and let it sit overnight before rinsing the garment with water in the morning. Let'er hang dry.



Fun fact: I once cleaned the apartment in which Woody Harrelson was staying while shooting a movie in town.

How do I remove lipstick from my silk shirt?

Oh! Femme or just New Orleanian? Anyway, I hate when I smear lipstick on my clothing. I rarely wear makeup, so if I get it on my clothing when I happen to paint my face with it, it's an extra big bummer. Because lipstick contains sticky oil and wax, and silk is delicate and porous, these two beauties shouldn't hang out together. The oily wax will be clingy and totally overwhelm the sensitive, sexy silk. First, blot the stain using a white rag to remove any excess lipstick off of the garment. Use as little pressure as possible as you blot. We're trying to remove the stain, not smear and grind the pigment deeper into the fabric. Next, grab a cotton ball and squirt some makeup remover (micellar water) and dab the cotton ball in a very light brushing motion. Rinse the shirt and let it air dry. If the stain is being a stubborn a-hole, sprinkle some baby powder over it for a few hours in order to absorb the oily makeup. After the hour, shake it off, then repeat.

How do I make a relaxing air freshener for my home?

Nice question! I actually started making products such as these when COVID first reared its devastating head in 2020. Add a cup of white vinegar (my bff) and two cups of water to a bowl. Sprinkle two tablespoons of baking soda into the bowl. Add about 20 drops of citrus essential oil and 20 drops of rose essential oil to the mixture. Now use a whisk to mix it all together. Pour the liquid into your bottle of choice and spray away the stanky vibes and odors. Fun fact: I once cleaned the apartment in which Woody Harrelson was staying while shooting a movie in town. As if blowing a kiss to everyone's favorite pot-smoking, naked-snowboarding actor, I sprayed this concoction into each room of the place before leaving. ♡



illustrations by Ben Claassen III
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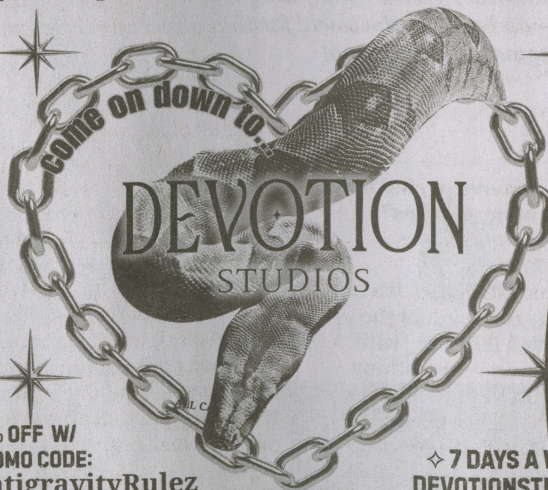
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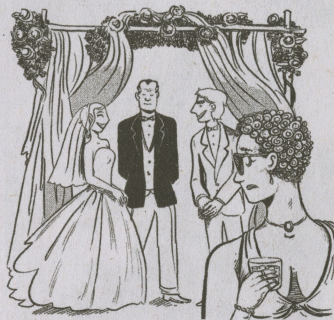
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OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

by Danielle Nelson, LCSW

Danielle Nelson is a practicing therapist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) who focuses on sexual health and wellness, trauma and recovery, self-esteem and resilience building, and general mental health concerns. Though Danielle is a trained professional, this column is not a substitute for advice or care provided by your licensed medical or health care professional.



Before we get to this month's Inquiry, I want to talk about how exposure to the suffering and distress of others affects us. Vicarious trauma (sometimes called secondary traumatic stress) happens when you're exposed to someone else's distress often enough—or intensely enough—that your nervous system responds as though the trauma actually happened to you. Vicarious trauma is most commonly used in the context of people whose work requires them to engage in painful material (think health care workers, therapists, first responders, etc.). But you don't have to be in the line of duty to experience it. You just need an internet connection and a few hours of reading.

When exposed to reports of maltreatment, abuse, and exploitation, like the contents of the Epstein files, your brain doesn't neatly file the content as "informational." Instead, your brain responds to the imagery, cruelty, and injustice as real threats and reacts accordingly. Summaries of graphic allegations coupled with appalling institutional failures can lead to intrusive thoughts, nightmares, emotional numbing, and feeling increased vulnerability and fear. You may feel hypervigilant or compulsively drawn to seek out more details while simultaneously regretting you looked in the first place.

Hypervigilance is a protective reflex—a state of intense alert where the brain constantly scans the environment for potential danger, even in safe situations. If you have a history of trauma or PTSD, your risk for vicarious trauma is higher, as exposure to the abuse of others can trigger echoes of your own experiences.

If you need support, The New Orleans Family Justice Center (nofjc.org/resources) has trained staff along with excellent resources. This also might be a good time to process your response with a licensed therapist who can help you navigate the complex emotions you may be feeling.

Being invited to an ex's wedding is one of life's more absurd social conventions. In a way, a kind gesture, but in another, it's like being invited to a ribbon cutting for a structure you helped build, but were later escorted out of.

Remember: having a visceral response to the suffering of others doesn't mean you're fragile. Experiencing a heightened emotional reaction means you're a human being capable of deep empathy.

Sadly, while the horrors persist, we still have to get groceries. We still have to pay the bills. We still have to navigate our own tender, and very human, dilemmas. We are in this together—holding massive existential dread and managing our personal dramas at the same time. Which brings us to the question sitting in one reader's mailbox.

I just got invited to my ex's wedding. We were together for three years and broke up very amicably just over two years ago. We haven't stayed in touch, but we share many friends. I've never met their new partner and

I haven't spoken to them in over a year. On paper, it feels polite and grown-up to go. I just worry that I could be one wrong facial expression away from becoming a cautionary tale. I love weddings and I'm friends with a lot of people who will be there, but I don't know if attending makes me gracious or masochistic. Is there a socially correct way to show up to an ex's wedding without making it weird—or is declining the invite the most mature move, even if it makes me look like I'm not "over it"?

Being invited to an ex's wedding is one of life's more absurd social conventions. In a way, a kind gesture, but in another, it's like being invited to a ribbon cutting for a structure you helped build, but were later escorted out of. There's no emotionally "correct" response here. Wanting to go doesn't make you immature, and declining doesn't make you somehow more evolved. This wedding invitation is not a subpoena. You are not legally required to show up and demonstrate growth, closure, or how well-adjusted you've become since the breakup.

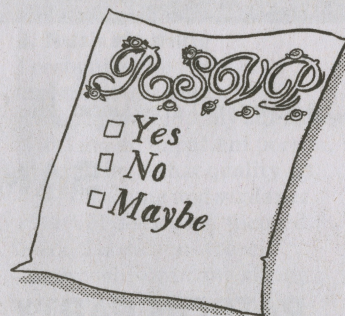
Weddings are largely about managing family expectations and negotiating seating charts. The real question at hand isn't whether or not attending would be gracious, but whether or not attending would be good for you.

As much as you may enjoy weddings, that alone isn't reason enough to go. While this could be a lively, friend-filled wedding, it also remains a commitment ceremony for a person you cared for, but are no longer committed to. It could bring up a lot of emotions you may not have even realized you're feeling. With that in mind, the last thing you need is a dysregulated nervous system (potentially fueled by alcohol) leading you down a path that could end tearfully in a reception hall bathroom. You wouldn't be the first, but I really don't want that story for you.

So, let's get to the bottom of the real issue: Is attending a good idea? Are you able to attend without analyzing the couple's body language, making comparisons, and wondering if there are Easter eggs in the vows that are directed at you? If the answer is yes—then go confidently. Catch up with old friends, dance, leave early, and call it a win. However, if you have a feeling that the night is hinging on a confirmation of some kind—like your attractiveness, your resilience, etc.—then skip it. This is not the event to conduct that particular thought experiment. An open bar, string quartet, and an unresolved relationship narrative is the perfect setting for a breakdown.

If you do go the route of declining, remember that you don't need justification or a back story. You don't owe anyone a speech or explanation about readiness or emotional growth. If you RSVP no, that is a complete sentence.

As you weigh this decision, it may be helpful to consider that the goal is not to be "gracious" or "polite." The goal is to do what makes you feel safe and emotionally intact. ♡



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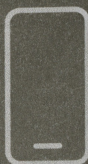
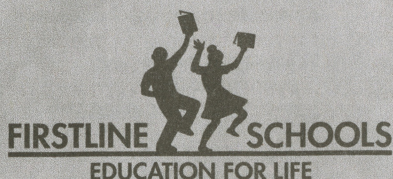
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RAISING LOUISIANA

by Cherie McCabe

Cherie McCabe is a Louisiana native and mother of two—soon to be three. She is the frontwoman and songwriter behind the alternative/trip-hop project *loucey*, which released its debut album *participation trophy wife* last year.

CREATION STORIES



I'm seated in the comfiest armchair in our living room. Laptop out. Hair is brushed—not mine, my daughter's—and yogurt is cleared off the counters—not mine, my son's. They are off to school, and I'm off to something. Cursor blinking, prompt at the top of the screen. *On creating art while raising kids.*

On a morning like today, hurried and scattered, it may as well be like asking how to make the impossible feel possible. And right when my mind starts to quiet, there's a firm kick from my lower abdomen. Hello there, third child of mine. We'll be meeting you in a few weeks.

Growing Up

Ever since I could read, call it first grade or so, I was devouring books. As you devour books, repeatedly, whole, with no hesitancy, you find yourself wanting to write. And once you start writing, you never really stop.

Young, elementary school me was devouring books while also finding a singing voice. My dad's tape deck was a favorite toy, pressing that bold, red "Record" button and seeing what melodies came from my mind. It was child's play. It was joy. The kind of feeling you could chase after your whole life.

Songwriting, and the desire to play my own music in front of people, came naturally as I picked up a guitar at age 14. I was writing about the big feelings of high school—the friends, the loves, the trivialities. Pop culture was celebrating the rise of the female singer-songwriter—Feist, Michelle Branch, Vanessa Carlton—and I wanted in. I'd sit on the patterned bedspreads of dear friends, strumming chords and giving us all something to sing along to.

As my husband/bandmate and I welcome our third child soon, I don't doubt that the art I love will be waiting for me, whenever I'm ready to return to it.

I found bandmates. I learned what it felt like to be in a studio and—more formally than before—hear your own voice back in your headphones, so personal and real. I could pull thoughts out of my head and they felt tangible. I could conquer them. I moved from Lafayette to New Orleans for college. I played the venues. I toured in a minivan. Projects ended, projects began. Music was a golden, liquid thread—lifegiving—but a part of me I'd sometimes tuck away from curious colleagues and acquaintances as I got a Day Job, because it almost meant too much. I was proud of our creations, a quiet, steady pride. I loved the work of it.

And yet, I wanted a family. I'd met The Guy. I am impatient.

Waiting on the Words

That's how I'd find myself, a handful of years later, sending

my two beautiful babies off to preschool and staring blankly at the denim blue accent wall we had painted in the house we bought, and wanting to write—having this incredible desire to give in to my own joy again after the wild, hormonal ride of two pregnancies and two postpartums—and waiting for the words to flow. And everything felt stuck.

Like a clogged drain, the fog of new motherhood and shift in identity had created some kind of residual buildup, and I wasn't really a qualified plumber after all, but I needed to clear that part of me out and figure out how to tap in again to my own thoughts. Not the baby's, not the toddler's... and forget the sleep schedule and the school emails and the doctor's appointments and the bills on the counter.

As I look back now, I realize there were three simple things that allowed me to find my way back to songwriting, two kids

Mom. Parent. Caretaker. These kinds of people are treasures. Hold on to those who uplift your creativity tightly, whether it's a handful of internet followers, your neighbors, or your brother. Allow them to be your cheerleader.

2. Tune in to Old Habits

Pen and paper, barefoot in my lounge pants, cross-legged on a rug, unplugged guitar in my lap. Thirty quiet minutes (at minimum) with nothing on the agenda. That was my old formula from high school when my writing was at its most playful and came most naturally, and so I made it my formula again. There was some part of me that knew it had to be this way. I couldn't squeeze in quality songwriting on my Notes app in the carpool line. I could pen fragments as I went, but the real work had to happen in a dedicated space where I could slow down time and tinker with my craft in a meaningful way. Consider the framework that existed when you first fell in love with whatever it is you do. Are you a morning person or a night person? I found that my early morning mind—a little dazed, a little more in tune with the world around me, less overwhelmed by the day's events—was my best for writing.

3. Rush Nothing

I recognize the irony in including this only a few paragraphs below my admission that I am an impatient person. The reality is that quality art does take time and vigilance. Hours of dedicated, focused work. Those hours rarely come easily or in one sitting as a parent. And in my case, as we began to piece together an album with a vision of pressing it to vinyl, I was forced to rush nothing—despite a constant, itching desire to *just finish it already*. All in all, we worked on our record for four years. I think there's a (perhaps) contrasting sentiment around putting out work as a parent-artist, where you don't need to strive for perfection, more is more, do it for yourself, don't get too hung up on it. If this philosophy works for you and still keeps you happy and creating, hell yeah. I couldn't do it. If you're the type that

cont'd on pg. 50



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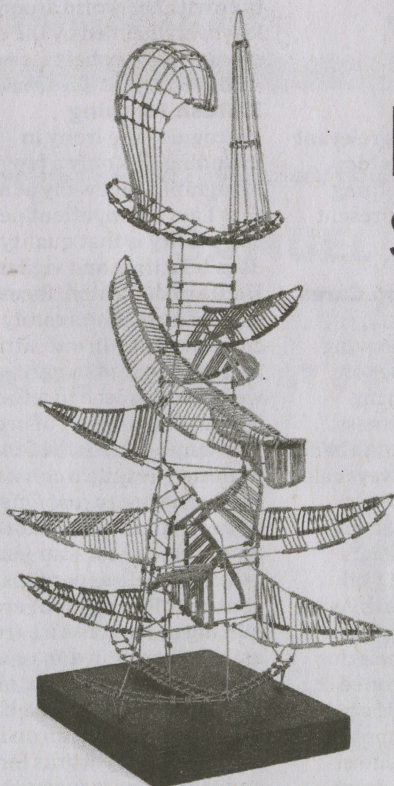
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HAYWARD OUBRE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

ON VIEW JANUARY 30 – MAY 3, 2026

The first monographic exhibition dedicated to the work of modernist Hayward L. Oubre, Jr., reveals how the artist shaped American art while working in the South.

Hayward L. Oubre, Jr., (1916 – 2006), *Space Rhythms*, about 1960, wire, The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, South Carolina

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ART BRINE

by Emily Farranto

Found in Translation Diana Antohe at Staple Goods

Diana Antohe's solo show, *the difference between looking and forgetting* at Staple Goods, is a mashup of languages: paint and thread, drawing and object, English and Romanian. Robert Frost is credited with coining the aphorism, "Poetry is what is lost in translation." I'd like to gently push back on that sentiment. Sometimes there is poetry in the effort to translate, and the willingness to engage with something we don't completely understand.

The exhibition consists of 13 works, most of them two dimensional, though some nudge toward sculpture. Staple Goods is an awkward exhibition space with a corner door entrance that challenges the white cube aesthetic. It's a small gallery, with daylight from a large picture window that sometimes washes out color. This show (closed now), rose above the gallery's homely bones. The work's soft-speaking, domestic-feeling work was actually served by it.

The first piece on the long exhibition wall is a cross-stitched rhomboid, roughly the dimensions of a piece of construction paper. The peculiar shape feels accidental, a byproduct of the tension created by the needle work pulling the rectangle askew. This serves the piece by undermining the expectation of right angles, much like the entrance to the room. It transforms the rigidity of the rectangle into a more homey shape. The top corners of the piece are tacked snugly to the wall with elegant pins nearly hidden in the stitching. The two bottom corners lift slightly away from the wall, suggesting rigidity of the textile. This decision, not forcing the rectangle shape

which I imagine could have been done by securing the bottom corners, was a good one. It gently declined the art norm of right angles and honored its own form.

Uppercase and lowercase letters form words, or what might be words, or what might be nonsense. It took me a moment to conclude that I not only couldn't read words, but the arrangement of letters was unfamiliar the way German or Spanish wouldn't be and yet they contained bits of English words "tin" and "mine."

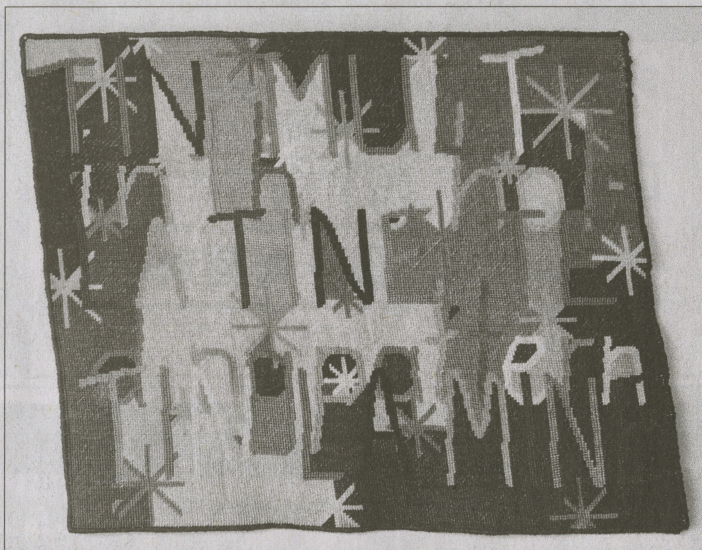
There is a subtle illusion of layering, uppercase letters overlapping words in lowercase overlapping asterisk stars in various yellows. Behind the stars is the background, color blocks in a variety of blues. The counters—the holes in letters like a, B, and q—are filled with their own hue, distinct from the background outside the letter, another school-age coloring approach. It's fitting then that the distinct but muted colors remind me of lesser-used Crayola crayons in the iconic 64-count box. Later, I learned from the artist that the piece was based on a colored pencil drawing. The title—*tin mult la tine, te tin la mine (in this holding pattern) / I hold you dear, I hold you close to me (1. in acest ciclu de asteptare 2. in acest suport fist)*—was in both English and Romanian.

There is a genre of household textiles—once common, once handmade, sometimes place specific—that have been replaced by generics, disposables, or rendered obsolete for other reasons. *Tin mult la tine* recalls one of these, a placemat or dresser scarf or something else. The feeling is

domestic, personal, a thing made with care. The piece resembles a utilitarian object but doesn't look practical. Instead it's meant to hold meaning.

Next to *tin mult la tine* is a vertical painting of a cat lying on its side on a boldly patterned rug. Typically, I would be thrilled to see a painting, a piece that speaks my own language. But this felt like running into an American neighbor in Krakow. I didn't want to speak painting; I wanted to struggle with the native language of the show. There are five paintings in the show, executed in vivid color and high

work, *Dragostea din tei*, was also familiar. "No way," I said aloud. The artist was gallery sitting, politely leaving me alone to look at the work. But I broke the silence and asked about the title. "Is it titled after the song?" "Dragostea din tei" is a 2003 Romanian pop song by the Moldovan band O-Zone. It was big that summer in Europe where I was living, then surfaced two years later in the U.S. as the "Numa Numa" song featured in a viral video. The artist was as surprised to learn I knew the song as I was to see its title, which translates to "Under the Linden Tree," on an artwork.



EMILY FARRANTO

tin mult la tine, te tin la mine (in this holding pattern) / I hold you dear, I hold you close to me (1. in acest ciclu de asteptare 2. in acest suport fesut)
Thread on cotton 16.5 x 14 inches

realism. The one I appreciated the most in this context was *Tei in Hyde Park* because it mixed media, forming a bridge between imagistic painting and textile, between picture and object, like running into an American neighbor in Krakow who gets you invited to a traditional Polish dinner because—surprise!—she is bilingual.

The base of the final work in a clockwise circuit of the gallery is lightweight pink fabric. It reminds me of a pillow case though it's too large to be one. Inside the yellow trim there is a colored pencil drawing of a linden tree. The emo words stitched in a circular pattern felt familiar. They are lyrics to the ABBA song "SOS." "How can I even try to go on when you're gone..." The title of the

A few hours later, I watched the Super Bowl halftime show featuring the American artist known as Bad Bunny who performed in Spanish and emphasized Puerto Rican history. Some English-only feathers were ruffled so much so that the organization Turning Point USA put on an "All-American Halftime Show." Is it an insult to speak—or cross-stitch—in a language other than English? Here in this country? No, of course not. That's stupid. So what do we do when we face a language or art form that confounds us? There are many options. We can enjoy abstract elements like color or melody. We can ask questions like, "What is the significance of the linden tree (or sugarcane)?"

cont'd on pg. 50

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8	9 KARAOKE W EMMA	10 HOLY DIVER	11 CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	12 FLIP FITCH DOG PARTY ATOM CAT DUMBSTER	13 MADAME MONSTER PRESENTS INNER ANGUISH RADE SUBOTAI THOSE MONSTERS	14 DUCK N' MOOSE
15 TBA	16 KARAOKE W EMMA	17	18 CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	19 TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT	20 CHRIS RUNTE PRESENTS	21 CHKNDRUM
22	23 KARAOKE W EMMA	24	25 CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	26 TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT	27 SUMMONING OF THE HOES	28 LOCAL RIFFS PRESENTS
29 	30 KARAOKE W EMMA	31 FREE JUKEBOX	1 CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	2 TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT	3 RESURRECTION GOTH INDUSTRIAL MONTHLY	4 DARK DISCO

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FOR THE RECORD

compiled by Jesse Lu Baum

On January 28, the newly-minted City Council convened for a special meeting to discuss a proposed data center, meant to be built at I-10 and Read Boulevard in New Orleans East. The proposal, put forth by a company called MS Solar Grid Data, was met with public outrage: The project would have placed the data center in a historically neglected part of New Orleans, provided a paltry 30 to 40 jobs, while emitting fine particulate matter airborne pollution. Critics also allege that the “solar” part of the company’s name is misleading, as they do not appear to be a solar developer. The data center was supposedly planned to be solar-powered, but plans for the facility were not submitted to the city. Driven by the boom of large language models (LLMs)—a subset of so-called “generative artificial intelligence”—which have an extremely high energy demand, there are now nearly 3,000 data centers under construction across the country, a massive increase to the roughly 4,000 already in existence in the United States. The power demand from these data centers has contributed to electricity costs which have grown at twice the rate of inflation. Data centers consume a mind-boggling amount of water (estimates vary from 5 million to hundreds of millions of gallons of freshwater per day, the lower end of which is roughly the demand of a small city) at a time when the world is reaching what experts call “water bankruptcy.” In response to local opposition, municipalities in Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Kansas, Ohio, Tennessee, Missouri, Idaho, California, Pennsylvania, and Indiana have blocked or outright banned data center developments. At the meeting, the Council passed a one-year ban on data centers, and the prospective owner reportedly withdrew their proposal for the project. The following are a selection of comments submitted online for the Council. They have been lightly edited for clarity and length.

The East has been put through enough over the years. Give [it] resources, not a data center which will ravage water supply and ultimately further hinder a community which so rightfully deserves positive growth.¹

I oppose the buildout of data centers in New Orleans. We do not need to build out new fossil fuel infrastructure in order to power the operations of companies that don’t provide much employment and only enrich Silicon Valley elites. The data centers are also thirsty for fresh water, and need water the most at the time of year when New Orleans is most vulnerable to saltwater intrusion. Data centers are a bad deal for the city!²

Respectfully, the city of New Orleans has no business entertaining discussion of a data center until we can supply clean, reliable power for our residents and businesses 365 days a year. We are uniquely positioned to suffer from the emissions of powering a data center with fossil fuels, and it would [be] shameful for us to pollute our environment even more when

we are already dealing with the acute effects of climate change here in New Orleans.³

Hello, please do not re-zone Little Woods neighborhood in New Orleans East and do not allow MS Solar Grid Data to build a data center in the area. It’s very clear that a data center nearby would use too much electricity and would affect the neighborhood’s water supply! Additionally, as I’m sure the City Council is already aware, neighbors are worried about more noise, bright lights, traffic, and lower property values surrounding their homes. I urge the City Council to think “people first” and stop putting economic growth over the livelihood of its constituents. Build more single family homes. Make better spaces for gardens, trees, and grass. Create more areas for things like farmers markets where local growers can share and sell their sustainable goods! Do not allow a data center to be built!⁴

I am against rezoning to allow a data center to be built in the East. Allowing a data center here would result in higher

utilities and even more stress on our already outdated and struggling water infrastructure. Locating the data center in the East is clearly environmental racism. Like most other polluting industries, they are targeting areas where they believe people won’t have the means to fight back and where representatives and people in power are willing to trade

“The city of New Orleans has no business entertaining discussion of a data center until we can supply clean, reliable power for our residents and businesses 365 days a year.”

residents’ health and wellbeing for the empty promise of new jobs and income. This data center will not benefit us as a city. I implore you to consider this as if you were one of the residents living directly across the street from the planned data center.⁵

Data centers should not be newly built anywhere, and especially not in predominantly Black, Brown, and Asian communities in New Orleans East. If you want to build something to help the residents there, build more supermarkets, build a community center for young people to practice the arts or work on their athleticism. Data centers have been proven to pull more resources (energy, water, oxygen) than they provide, and leave residents with the financial and environmental bill. AI technology has yet to prove its value to the betterment of people. We should be focused on education and enrichment of the people of New Orleans, and not LLMs that most CEOs would wish to replace us.⁶

The residents of New Orleans East have been an [after] thought in the decades following Hurricane Katrina. Having to deal with the influx of people displaced from other areas of the city with no resources to accommodate them. Instead of grocery stores, shopping centers, things to stimulate the economy in the East, you want to build a data center, is that correct? For what? That already crumbling infrastructure can’t even manage what we have now. Data centers require water pumps, so you expect the city to go without adequate water pumps when it floods but the data center gets

water pumps? A lot of people are without clean water and data centers require clean water so residents don’t deserve clean water but data centers do? Lastly, the electricity is unstable and a data center won’t be doing our power grids any favors. I speak for myself, my family, my neighborhood, all of the New Orleans Indians that came before me and all of the ones

that are going to come after me: Keep these data centers out of New Orleans.⁷

I vehemently object to ANY data centers, much less in my beloved city of New Orleans. Data centers use absurd amounts of energy and water. Not only is this bad for the planet, but it leads to increased electricity and water bills for residents. The big tech companies who foisted these data centers upon us without our consent never seem to be the ones footing the bill; they reap the benefits while the rest of us end up struggling to survive while robots take our jobs. There have been cases of residents near data centers contracting cancer. That is another reason we don’t need them in New Orleans, which already lies at the butt-hole of Cancer Alley.⁸



To follow up on these issues, you can email your City councilmembers. To submit a public comment, follow instructions at council.nola.gov. Interested in reading all comments after a meeting? You can email your councilmember or file a public records request.

1. Mary S.
2. Nicholas B.
3. Zoe J.
4. Christopher H.
5. Camille C.
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illustration by Sadie Wiese
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3/31	Drunk Picasso 504 Presents: CLOTHING SWAP
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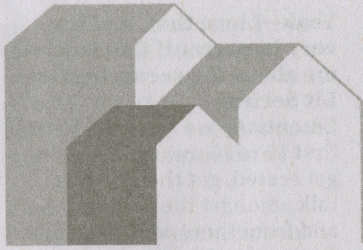


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Wishing Everyone a Reflective Lent (Especially the Slumlords)

We hope you all had a joyful and exciting Carnival. Now that the real "New Year" is here, let's get to work to protect our city and its residents from displacement. Homes for people, not for profits!

What's Happening this Spring? Let's Look at the Past

In order to understand what may be happening, we have to look at what has transpired over the last few months. This past fall provided us some perspectives. Our city elected a new mayor, Helena Moreno, new at-large City councilmember (Matthew Willard), and the most notable supporter of affordable housing on City Council, Lesli Harris, ran unopposed. Residents also voted to support bonds geared towards affordable housing. Former councilmember Joe Giarrusso is now the chief administrative officer (CAO) of the City and is in control of shaping the City's budget from the executive branch side of our municipal government. We also have new City councilmembers in districts A (Aimee McCarron) and E (Jason Hughes).

The City Planning Commission finally discussed and voted on the Transient Lodging Study this past January. The City also approved a budget that led to decreases in spending in various areas.

by Y. Frank Southall

What We're Anticipating

We have seen drastic cuts to Right to Counsel, youth programs, and other areas impacting the general public. We encourage you to go to the Committee for a Better New Orleans website (cbno.org) and learn more about the horrors of this year's budget process.

Next: We ask you to email our City councilmembers to share your perspective on *why* Right to Counsel funding should be restored back to the original \$2 million and to once again fund the rental assistance fund. We understand that this money originally came from the federal government, but it's about time that we use some of our almost \$1 billion City budget on \$15 million to help out our residents. Consider this your March(ing) tasks.

Here are your City councilmembers' email addresses and phone numbers. Confirm your district councilmember at nola.gov/council-maps. When emailing them, please also include their chiefs of staff and neighborhood or community liaisons (you can find their email addresses on the individual pages of each councilmember at council.nola.gov/councilmembers). Be polite and talk about your concerns. Mass emails to all councilmembers will go unanswered.

District A

Aimee McCarron
Aimee.McCarron@nola.gov
504-658-1010

District B

Lesli Harris
Lesli.Harris@nola.gov
504-658-1020

District C

Freddie King III
Freddie.King@nola.gov
504-658-1030

District D

Eugene Green
Eugene.Green@nola.gov
504-658-1040

District E

Jason Hughes
Jason.Hughes@nola.gov
504-658-1050

At-Large (citywide)

Matthew Willard
Matthew.Willard@nola.gov
504-658-1060

At-Large (citywide)

JP Morrell
JP.Morrell@nola.gov
504-658-1070

City Council meetings are listed at the following site: council.nola.gov/meetings. Remember, every time you buy something or whether you're a renter or homeowner, you are paying into the system! You deserve to know what's going on. Your voice matters more than the lobbyists seeking to gentrify and shape our city into a museum for tourists.

Eviction Updates: Go! To! Court!

If an eviction is filed against you, whether or not you attend your eviction hearing will likely decide your case. Once again, this past month, we saw many cases end in formal eviction rulings because the tenant facing eviction didn't come to court. In one day's court session Downtown, over 50% of cases ended this way. **An eviction hearing with no tenant present is often decided in under 10 seconds, but the resulting formal eviction decision will remain on the tenant's rental and credit histories long-term.** Even if you have already moved out, go to court and tell the judge so your case can be dismissed and not affect you long-term.

As a reminder: In Orleans Parish Eviction Court, you can access free legal representation regardless of your income or citizenship status under the Right to Counsel Program. At your court date, find Southeast Louisiana Legal Services' (SLLS) Eviction Help Desk (right outside the courtroom). Want help before court? Call SLLS at 504-529-1000, extension 223. Leave a message, they'll call back. If you're having other housing issues, call Jane Place's Renters' Rights Hotline at 504-539-4504. We also organize a renters' rights clinic during the monthly Renters' Rights Assembly every first Thursday of the month.

Upcoming Fun Events, Workshops, and How to Connect

Wanna get involved?
Get informed? Join us at these events!

New Orleans Renters' Rights Assembly (and Renters' Rights Clinic) Thursday 3/5 6 to 8 p.m.

First Grace UMC (entrance through back parking lot)
3401 Canal St. 70119

Know Your Rights, Know Your Power: Renters' Rights Workshop Thursday 3/26 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Jane Place's Office
200 S. Broad Street (entrance through parking lot off of Cleveland)

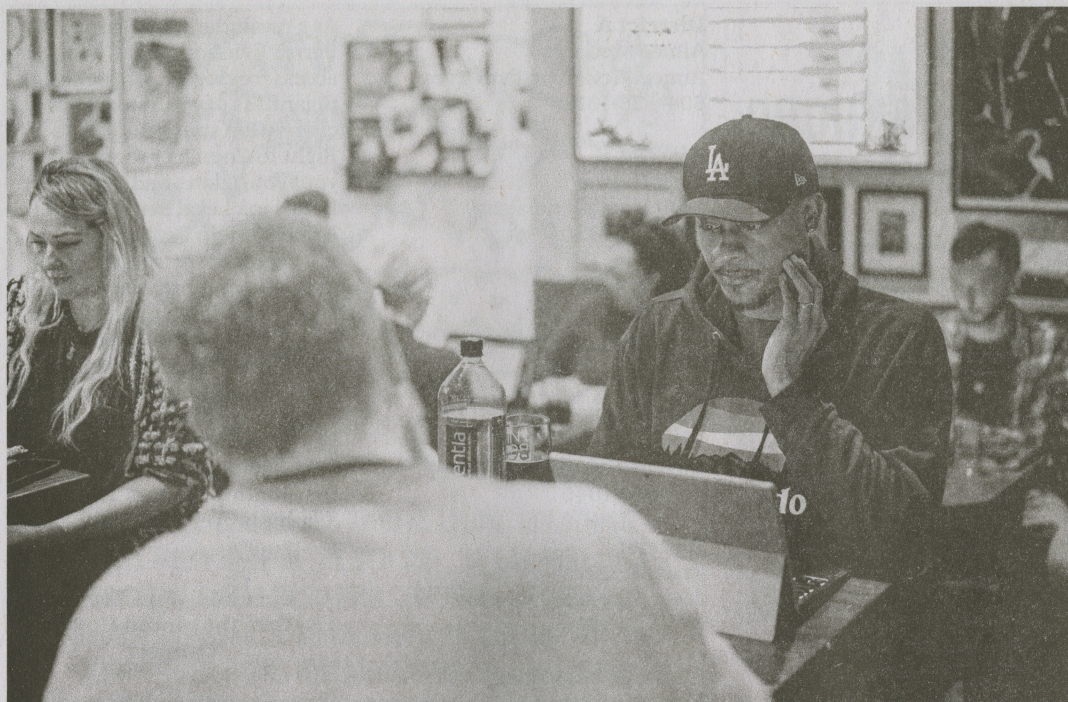
Better New Orleans Block Party (from the Committee for a Better New Orleans) Saturday 3/28 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

1200-1400 blocks of St. Roch Ave.

For more information, go to jpnsl.org, email frank@jpnsl.org, or text UPDATES to 504-517-5470 with your name and the event you have interest in.



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KATIE SIKORA

All Work (and Some Play) with Third Lantern Lit

by Branna Elenz

New Orleans is notable for musicians, artists, and many fantastic writers sharing histories and weaving tales. While Mardi Gras is a moment for every costumed person to become a storyteller in their own way, creative expression exists year-round and there's always a community ready to welcome you in. Talking with Danny Cherry Jr., president of Third Lantern Lit (and frequent ANTIGRAVITY contributor), it was clear how central the creation of community is in this local literary nonprofit. Founded in 2022, Third Lantern Lit (3LL) brings together writers of all levels, offering free access to events like "Writing Craft Q&A with Philip Fracassi" and workshops with local published writers, including Maurice Carlos Ruffin, Jami Attenberg, Alex Jennings, and more. Curated topics in sessions like "A Producer's Guide to Writing a Novel" and "Getting Your Book on Shelves: A Panel with Local Bookstores and Libraries," provide education around the writing process both during and after the text is complete, from finding an agent to getting your work out into the world. Hosting events, in addition to their annual galas, is another way 3LL continues to foster spaces for local writers to come together, network, learn, and create.

How long have you been involved with 3LL?

I want to say it was a couple months after I went to the first event. We became a 501(c)(3) [in December 2022] and that's when I officially became the treasurer on paper instead of just in name only.

And what was your biggest draw?

People to talk about writing with—I didn't really have that

at that point. I was just with people on Reddit in this writing group. Doing 3LL, there's a social aspect too, because those are the people I've come to consider friends and not just randoms online.

Writing can be a very vulnerable space. What are some ways that you would say 3LL creates a welcoming, safe environment?

I don't know if it's because we

meet at breweries and places like that—which helps people get out of their little social bubble—but I would definitely say, at least in my experience, that we're just very welcoming to people of all different levels.

With everything that AI is doing with the media and news and society, how do you feel this affects the need for communities like 3LL?

So we definitely do not endorse the use of AI and I think the importance of meeting people in person is that you actually have a person to talk to and get feedback from. I'm not 100% sure of everything people use AI for, but I think that it's not a replacement for having an actual person to sit there and critique you and talk with about your story. Also, just being around other artists helps you generate ideas. In our meetings, we all just talk for the first 10 to 15 minutes, and that's when you're forming relationships, you're talking about ideas. That's part of the reason why I stayed on so long. I get this creative spark from being around other writers. And that's actually why I was open to being a part of the board and being one of the organizers—I instantly bought into the mission of not writing alone. A big part of it is that we want to make a community. We want to educate people too, but we also want to feel there's a writing scene.

Yeah—I love that, and it's very important! Can you tell me about the recurring Get Lit Series?

Essentially we show up, for the first 10 to 15 minutes people get seated, get their drinks, talk amongst themselves, and from there we'll typically do three writing sprints where the entire goal is to not overthink—just sit there and write. Somebody will go up to the front and say, "I'm gonna set a timer for 15 to 20 minutes and write as much as you can throughout that time." And that's kind of the gist of it: write as much as you can for as long as you can and not think about it too much. Just get words on a page. And then [there's time at] the end for people to talk about what they wrote. So there's the social aspect and there's also the getting work done aspect.

And you said that people can write about anything they want. Do you ever have themes of what people can write?

We do have an event, it's a three-part thing called "Page to Stage" and that is themed. Whenever we typically have a workshop leader come in—always a published author who is local, who knows a lot about the genre, who's published a lot in the genre—they'll give you exercises. It's a lot of education going on, but there's also a generative aspect too, and most of the time people leave that night with a story of their own. So then the second step is an editorial workshop—that's where you take the thing you just wrote and another workshop leader comes in and helps you edit it to be genre-specific. And then the third step is our Page to Stage: It's where we take what you wrote, what you edited, and now you go up on the stage and you practice how you perform in front of people. It's open to anybody, and you don't even necessarily have to have been to the first two parts of it because we print out little short stories that you can read while you're on stage. So you can still get the practice in. Another powerful component is that people can

Top: Danny Cherry Jr. takes part in Get Lit at Miel Brewery on January 20

submit the stories they wrote throughout that three-part cycle and they can be randomly selected for what's called Fiction Sessions, and that's our quarterly reading series.

That's cool!

Yeah, we're very excited about that, we started that last year. And what I love about it is that it's writers of different levels of experience. [For some] new writers, our Fiction Sessions is their first time ever reading. So we're very democratic in that way. We're not exclusive.

How do you determine what the genres or artists are going to be each series?

Our [director of event coordination, Michelle Kelleher] generates the ideas and then we all as a group come together and it takes on a life of its own from there.

I'm curious in general how, aside from participating in events, people can contribute to the topics?

Sometimes we have people reach out to us and say, "Hey, I have this workshop I would like to lead."

Have you been able to collaborate with any nonprofits in the work you do?

Oh yeah, Tennessee Williams [Fest] is one of our biggest supporters and another fellow nonprofit literary organization. We recently, in November, partnered with Macmillan Publishers' imprint called Tor Nightfire and we did an author Q&A with Philip Fracassi. We also partner with businesses too. We consider Blue Cypress to be a business partner and we've done a good bit of events with them at their place. Verret's Lounge has donated alcohol to us for the past three galas and there's Miel, Courtyard—I could name a thousand, and SPORTS DRINK [has] also been very generous with their space.

So the Gala! I know you just had one recently, in November? Is that a yearly thing?

That was our third annual one and 3LL has existed for about four years, but we've only been a nonprofit for about three—I want to say we got our certification in December 2022. As soon as we started, that year we became a



SOPHIA HODGSON

Adrian Van Young speaks at the Third Lantern 2025 gala at BK House

nonprofit is the year we started doing our gala. And the last one was our biggest one yet—we had at least 100 people there, [and] readings with seven writers who are all local. And we view it to be just one big celebration of the writing community. The last gala felt more like a party. We had drinks, we had door prizes, we had a lovely space that BK House had donated to us for the night. People were dressed up all nice. The theme was the Bohemian Ball, so a lot of people in nice suits and dresses and gowns. It was good to see a lot of people from our events show up to the gala, and for other people who've been to our past events who just wanted to have the community.

So great! So, you accept donations through the website, you have your annual galas. Can you tell me a little bit more about priorities in where those donations go?

I would definitely say for spaces that we have. We do have people that are generous and do donate their space, but for Page to Stage and for the Fiction Sessions series we do have to pay for that space. Something we want to start this year is paying our workshop leaders an honorarium. So our highest priority for this year is going to be paying our workshop leaders.

Are there any other ways that people can either volunteer or contribute to

the organization in some way that's not financial?

We definitely need volunteers. We've grown a lot! We've had 75 events roughly in just this past year, which is a crazy amount of events being that we only had 53 in the first two years of our existence combined! We definitely need all the people power we can get. If anyone wants to volunteer, just reach out to us on Instagram or email us.

Has there been a workshop, whether that be an event or a certain series, maybe a certain artist, that's really stuck out to you?

For me personally as a writer, I learn something different each workshop that we do, but the one I remember the best, because I was able to get a lot of writing done—like I actually left with a story idea—was when Michelle Kelleher led a workshop on world building and fantasy. I typically don't write [that genre] but I actually did come up with an idea I really liked that night and she was very informative. And I'm not just saying that because we're friends and on the board together. [laughs] I actually got something out of it!

Is there any advice you would give someone who is interested in writing but maybe doesn't know where to start or is nervous about starting?

I would tell that person to find their people, find their group.

[When] I found 3LL it wasn't just a writing group for me anymore because I actually did make friends. And that's whenever I felt as though my writing started to get better. I mean, I can't really pathologize it, I'm not really sure why, per se. I think there's something about being around like-minded people that can inspire you. So I would definitely say find your people in-person if that is an option for you! And if you're nervous about starting writing in general, start with one word. It definitely does help to have people that are pushing you. We've had a lot of newcomers come to our organization and tell us that they've continued with their writing because of our event. It's not like you're trying to push a boulder up the hill by yourself—now you have people who are with you. ♡



For more info about Third Lantern Lit, check out thirdlanternlit.org or @thirdlanternlit on Instagram and Discord.



KATIE SIKORA

Paint Your Heroes with Brent Houzenga

by Katie Sikora

I first met Brent Houzenga during the acute madness that was the beginning of the COVID-19 society-wide shutdowns in March of 2020. We had both secured temporary gigs with the Krewe of Red Beans to pick up meals from closed restaurants and deliver them to the overworked emergency rooms of all the area hospitals in an effort called Feed the Front Line NOLA. We were subsequently tapped to create artwork promoting the community aid initiative. The deliveries continued for six weeks, and a fast friendship was built. Later that spring, we collaborated again on a portrait of one of the hoppers on strike from Metro Service Waste in June 2020. Our joint works have been featured in his zines and other previous self-publications. I sat down with him in his action figure and art-adorned house to discuss his work, where he finds his inspiration, and his brand new book, Time Again.

Describe your artistry to me. What are your mediums, guiding thoughts and principles, and important messages?

I primarily work with spray paint and I make stencils. But I kind of consider myself, in some regard, an action painter, where the stencil is just part of the process and it's more about making moves, reacting to those

moves, and being free with the process until the actual image emerges. Coming up on 20 years, I've been working with these found photographs, that I found in someone's trash, from the 1890s. At the time I didn't know what I was doing, but something just happened and I started using them. I tried to find out who these people were. But without a name, historical

societies and such can't do much to help you, and I didn't have a name. For me, they came to represent the everyman. And because they're anonymous people and I never found out who they were or what they did, they just sort of became like a symbol for me. That everybody is meant to shine. So that could be me, it could be you.

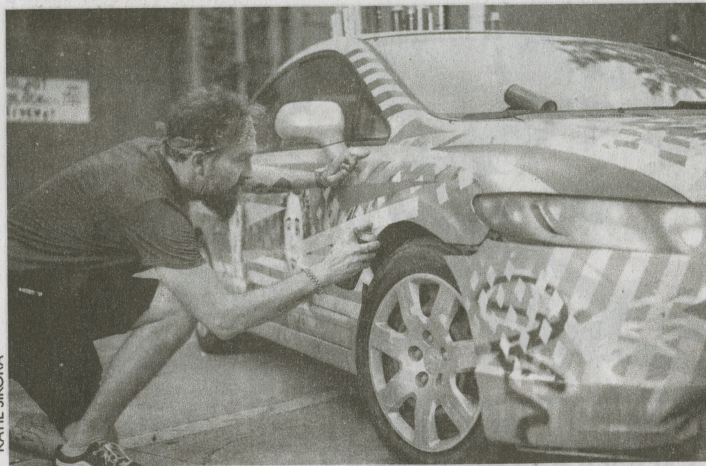
Whose trash was it?

I don't know. I was in Macomb, Illinois, about to graduate from college.

I'm sure your process has changed between then and now, but for your newer works, are you researching these people that you're creating portraits of? Or do you go in blind?

After painting these found photos, it gave me a particular interest in photography and the history of photography. Because if you look at these photos, they're cabinet cards. So that's from a certain period of time and I thought that was really interesting. And I thought, the science of photography and its evolution is really cool. It's fucking magic. And so that was

really interesting. And through that I found out that Frederick Douglass was one of the most photographed people of the 19th century. Then I thought, I gotta read about him, you know? He wrote these beautiful essays about the power of art and what it can do. So whenever anybody asked him to sit [for a photograph], he would do it, because he wanted to be presented as a statesman and an upstanding person at a time when Black people were portrayed primarily as slaves. So that sort of led me to research... people. In 2020, I worked with Feed The Front Line to create posters and murals across the city and painted one of the hoppers that was on strike during the Black Lives Matter protests. And in the midst of all that, a friend told me I should read about the suffragettes. Right after that, I painted Emmeline Pankhurst, who was a suffragette in England. I read about all of them, but she was one of the leaders. A little while later, I painted Lucy Parsons, who was in Chicago around the time of the labor question. That's what they called it (the labor



Painting a car during Jammin' on Julia, an art-focused block party on Julia Street in the CBD, May 2022.

movement). And she was a radical. She was an anarchist. So that's kind of what led me to the stuff that I've painted this year. And then, during this second time around with the orange man, I was kind of like, I don't know what else to do, but I can read books and I can make paintings and hopefully use this natural occurring phenomenon of people asking me, *who is that?* to actually tell a story and educate people.

Why masking tape and spray paint?

Well, I went to fine art school and I studied printmaking. We had the lab and the presses and the inks and stuff. But I'm also a punk rocker. So half of who I am is academic, because I do have an education. And half of who I am is because of my punk and DIY roots. I had a zine in college and when I graduated I wanted to keep making art. I found stencils and spray paint

"Somebody once told me that there is a time to stop being punk rock. And that time is not now."

What have you learned about yourself through connecting to these figures from the past?

The thing that I latch onto is, why don't I know these stories? These people have a place in history, but it's not common knowledge. And with everything going on today, it's a little bit of trying to communicate to people, *don't you know what we had to do to get here and to get what we have?* So that's one part. The thing I've learned about myself is that I do have the capacity to approach these things in a really academic way and do the research, and do the work. I'm an artist, and I'm going to make these paintings. I don't know if it makes a difference. Maybe it makes a little difference. A lot of times it just feels like I'm not doing enough. I think everybody feels that way.

because posterboard cost less than a dollar back then and a can of spray paint cost a dollar. So I literally got the cheapest spray paint I could find with the most basic colors—I think yellow, red, blue, green, white, and black—and that's what I had to work with. And I was using found objects at the time. So it was punk as fuck. And I could make a bunch of stuff without spending any money. I didn't really realize it until later that the punk aesthetic is in the artwork.

Would you say you're an artist who has a hard time looking back on some of their earlier work? Or is it enjoyable to find that thread through all of your stuff?

No, it's cool. I love it. And, you know, some of the stuff I made in 2006 could easily sit right next to some of the stuff I made today.

You have a new book coming out. What can you tell me about that?

The idea came from the consistent viewer response of, *who is that?* They want to put a name with a face and that always gave me an avenue to tell my story—why would you paint [someone] that you don't know? And the story of my book, *Time Again*, is me going from the beginning of my career saying, "I will never paint anyone famous," to today saying, "Here's the exact type of people I will paint." For a long time, my work was sort of anti-fame because I feel like you shouldn't idolize anyone. Like, you're just as good as anyone else. But then, at some point, I realized how important it is to have heroes. The book is the byproduct of a show I produced first in Waterloo, Iowa based on this evolution, and will reproduce here in New Orleans this month.

And then the show, when does that open?

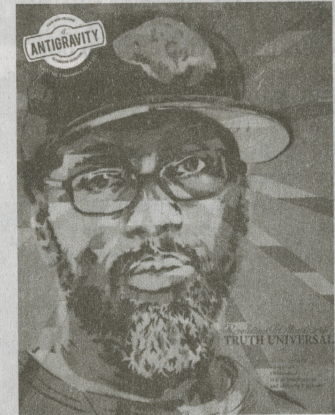
It'll be the second Saturday of March. Leading up to that, I'm going to Iowa to do the closing for the *Time Again* gallery show there. This is a big trip because I'm going to do the closing, and then the next day I've been asked to speak at my high school for their dinner on academic excellence. I'll also be working with some students from my high school and the high school where my sister teaches. Then I'll come home and put the show up and have the release party here at Chemical 14 in the Bywater.



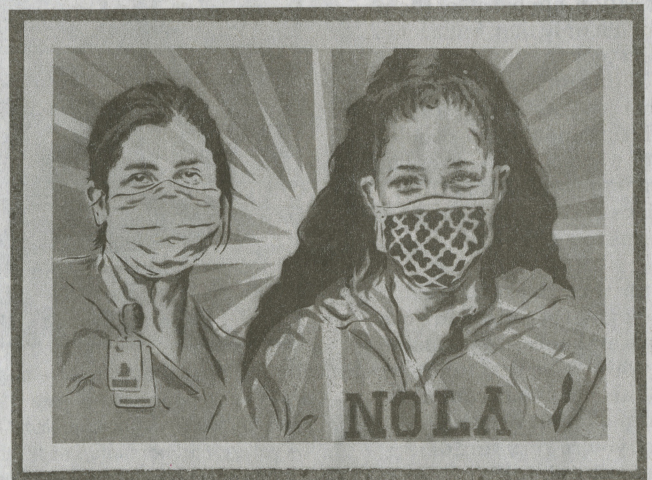
Frederick Douglass



Emmeline Pankhurst



Truth Universal
(November 2013 ANTIGRAVITY)



Feed the Front Line NOLA



KATIE SIKORA

For someone who's never been to a Houzenga show before, what should they expect?

They should expect a lot of color. A lot of people like to say my stuff is pop, but I think it's more psychedelia. Sort of a little sensory overload.

I think it's grittier than pop.

I mean, it's something else, that's for sure.

If you had to summarize the overarching message of what the show and the subsequent book encapsulates, what would you say that is? Or is there one?

Basically, all the people in the show and book are different. Maybe at their time they weren't totally normal people, but they were able to write and they saw what was happening in the world, and they called for action, almost all of them. And not only that, but a lot of them took the consequences of calling for that action. The other part of it is my story. Painting anonymous people and swearing I will never paint famous people, to realizing what a hero is and what it means to me.

After the release of the book and the shows in both Iowa and here, do you have anything else that's coming up this year that you're excited about or things that you're thinking of or dreaming about?

Well, me and Elijah are in a band.

And for our readers, Elijah is?

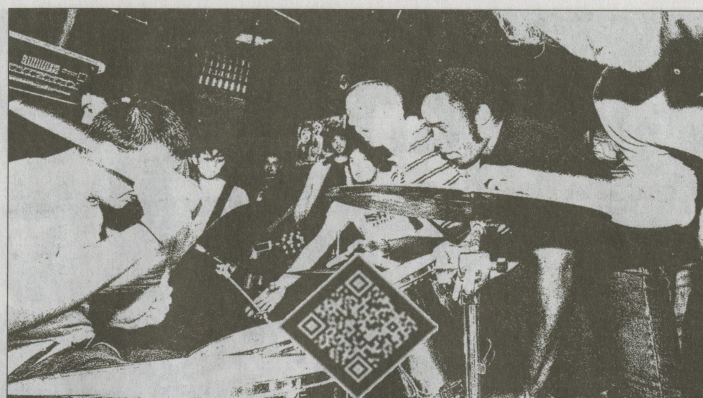
My son. The book is dedicated to him. We would like to play some shows. We would like to record some music. I also have another band with some adults, tentatively titled The Father Thing. So we're hoping to play some music as well. I've also had some cool music things happen. One of my songs ["Empathy (Dead Ahead)"], which is a protest song, was on this compilation called *Punksgiving* with a bunch of bands from all over the country. So I was really happy to be included in that.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Oh, somebody once told me that there is a time to stop being punk rock. And that time is not now. And I don't see when that time will ever be.



The Time Again book release and art exhibition opening will take place on March 14 at Chemical 14 gallery. For more info, check out houzenga.com, @houzenga on Instagram, and chemical14.com.



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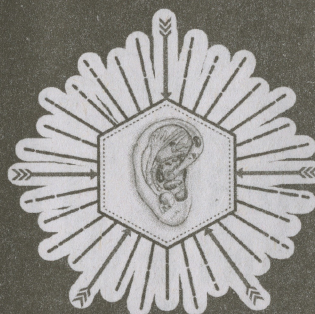


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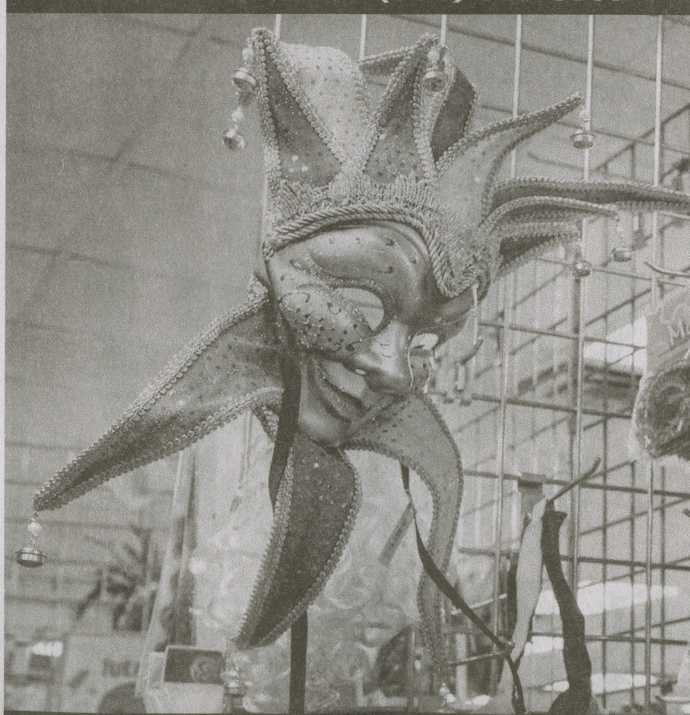
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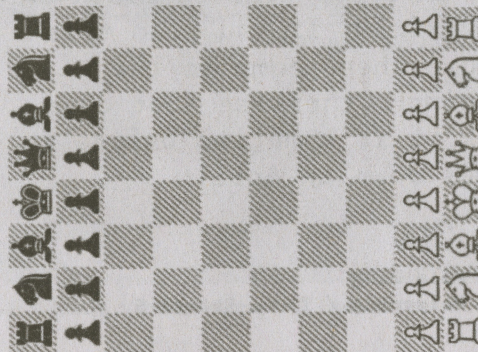


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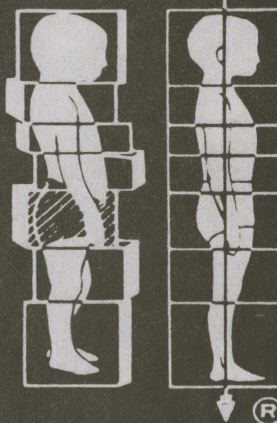


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The Beloved Brass Band performs outside of Barrel Proof on Mardi Gras Day to kick off the Krewe of JULU's procession through the Lower Garden District, CBD, and French Quarter. (Photo by Dan Fox)



The St. Augustine Marching 100 take part in the Krewe of Freret on St. Charles Avenue on February 7. (Photo by Brandon Robert)



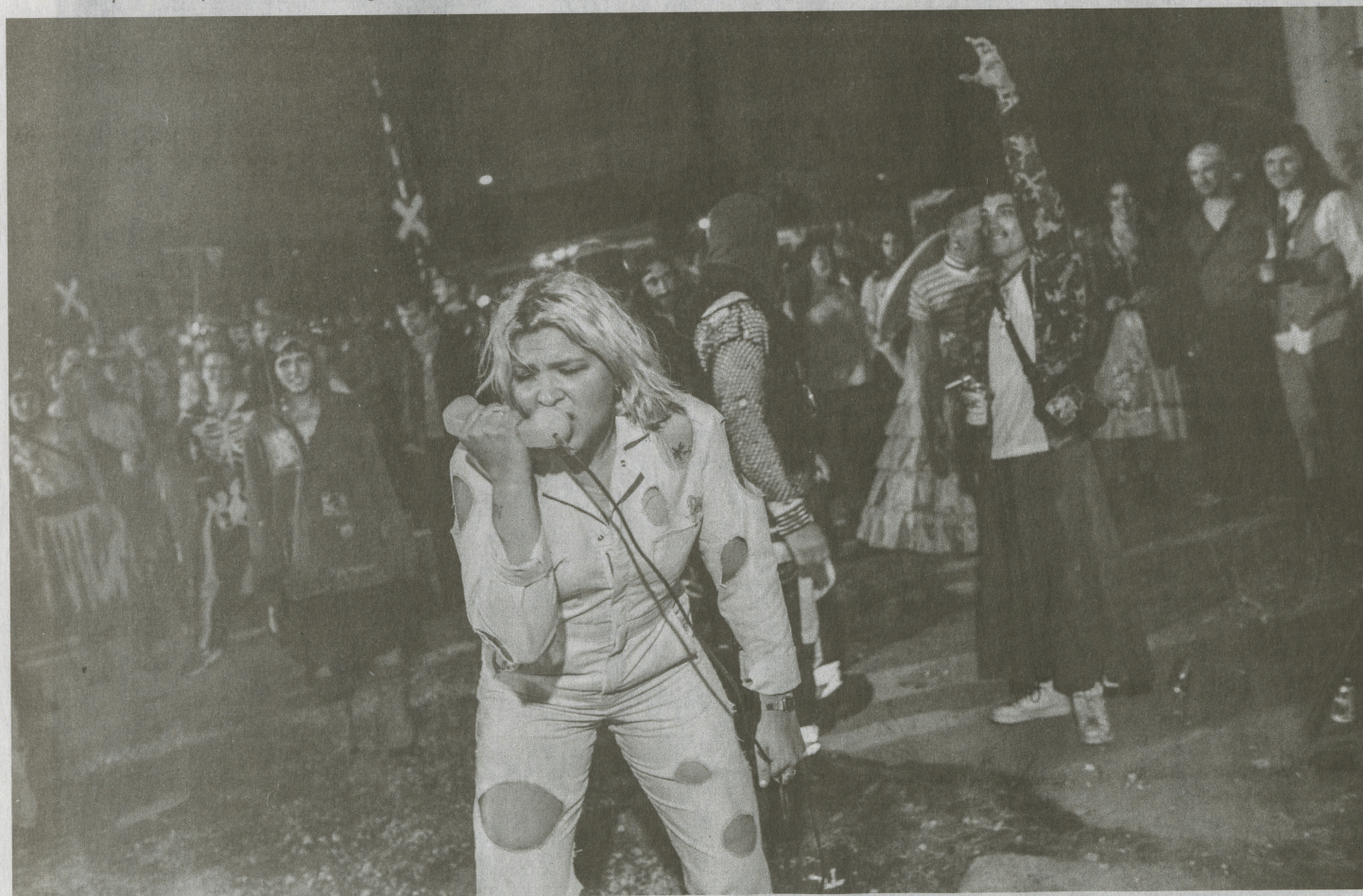
Members of Batey Bayou, a Puerto Rican percussion and dance group, parade from Bayou St. John to Mid-City during the second annual Lundi Gras celebration



Dayou San Juan Social Group, organized by Lucha Krewe. (Photo by Temple Blacksnake)



A child is helped down from the rocks along the the Moonwalk Riverfront Park on Mardi Gras Day. (Photo by Marisa Clogher)



Vocalist Emma Ledgewood fronts new local band W-9 during their first performance outside of StudioBE on Mardi Gras Day. (Photo by Dalton Spangler)

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The Gaul of it All at the 29th French Film Festival

by ANTIGRAVITY Staff

With a rich variety of animated shorts, local documentaries, and dramatic features, the 29th annual New Orleans French Film Festival has something for everyone. Want to watch a documentary about zydeco music? What about an animated Holocaust movie from an Oscar winner? If surreal sci-fi is more your speed, they've got that too. How about a classic (or two) by the all-around creative genius Jean Cocteau? This feast for the Franco-cinephile is laden and waiting. Allons-y?



NARRATIVE FEATURES

Beauty and the Beast *La Belle et la Bête*

It's a tale as old as time... the daughter of a merchant gives up her freedom so her father can live, only to be condemned to spend the rest of her days trapped in the castle of a hideous beast. Jean Cocteau's 1946 reimagining is sultry and ravishing. Jean Marais is our

Beast, covered head-to-toe in practical fur, topped with animatronic cat-like ears. His emotions are in his movements and his swooning self-pity is more Romeo than monster. As Belle, Josette Day's intoxicating allure sends a hypnotic fervor through every frame. The film works to match Day's grand expressions with touches of pure magic—candelabras held by extended human hands flare

up by themselves, smoke billows from the fingers of the Beast after he has killed, and mirrors shimmer and smash apart when emotions run high. Cocteau considered himself first and foremost a poet, and his lyrical look at this romance doesn't just highlight the emotional forces of the heart; it twists the physical world to express the euphoria of the body. Marais was Cocteau's muse and lover, and he uses every trick of the camera to express his love for this Beast. With its lush cinematography, crooning musical chorus, and painterly, kaleidoscopic sets, *La Belle et la Bête* serves as a love letter to our primal desires.

—Zain Hashmat

Nino

Nino, Pauline Loquès' feature-length directorial debut, is clearly indebted to *Cléo from 5 to 7*, Agnès Varda's French New Wave masterpiece about a woman awaiting her cancer diagnosis told in real time. *Nino* picks up where *Cléo* left off. Théodore Pellerin won the Louis Roederer Foundation Rising Star Award at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival for his performance as Nino Clavel, who we meet as he receives a surprise cancer diagnosis the weekend of his 29th birthday. He locks himself out of his apartment and spends the next three days confronting life and death. He reckons with his dead father's passing while spending a quiet birthday evening with his mother. His ex is moving to Montreal. His friends throw him a surprise party where he lets loose and waxes philosophic.

Mathieu Amalric makes a cameo as a man yearning for his dead wife. Nino runs into an old classmate with a child and builds a rapport over the course of a day. He even produces a sperm sample in the most romantic baby monitor phone sex you will ever see, featuring the erotica of Anaïs Nin. Wearing his anxiety and apprehension on his face, Pellerin carries a film that portrays a close-to-universal experience with optimism.

—Carlos A. Molina



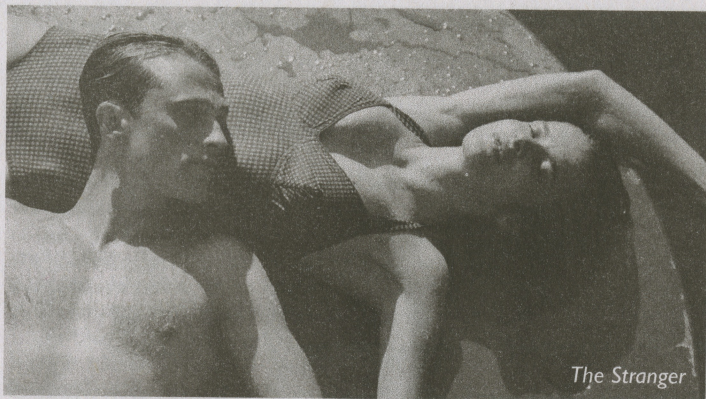
Orpheus | *Orphée*

As New Orleanians, we are very familiar with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* sets his interpretation of the myth in 1950s France, with poets, greasers, beatniks, and bohemians modernizing the myth. Cocteau himself was a dreamer, poet, playwright, and filmmaker who used surrealism to his creative advantage. The world of dreams and the afterlife was his sandbox, and his exploration is extensive and rife with experimentation with different special effects. The mirror portals presage such CGI revolutionaries as *Terminator 2* and *The Matrix*, using mercury and trick photography to achieve an amazingly trippy effect, even more impressive when considering it was made over 75 years ago. The performances of Jean Marais (Orpheus) and Maria Casares (Death) toe the line perfectly between aloof and cunning. It's an excellent adaptation and update of the classic myth, and its fairy tale quality juxtaposes well with Rolls-Royces and '50s aesthetic. Cocteau's use of all the effects at his disposal continues to surprise and visually impress even a modern audience.

—Carlos A. Molina

The Piano Accident *L'accident de piano*

Adèle Exarchopoulos stars as viral video sensation Megajugs in her third collaboration with director Quentin Dupieux,



whose film *Daaaaaali!* played at last year's French Film Festival. Dupieux continues to excel at surrealist genre blending in *The Piano Accident*, a satire of both celebrity and consumerism, as well as our addiction to fame and the internet. Exarchopoulos downplays her beauty for a role that puts her in braces, a cast, and a boyish haircut to embody an entitled and petulant social media star who thinks she can throw money at anything. Her character, who is immune to physical pain, has escaped to an isolated chalet in the mountains after some sort of mysterious mishap involving one of her videos, and then a journalist attempts to blackmail her. The film strategically withholds information to keep the viewer intrigued and guessing, so the less said, the better. It snowballs into wanton acts of desperation as she and her manager Patrick, played by the French comedian Jérôme Commandeur, attempt to remedy the situation. It all comes together as a scathing critique of what we're willing to do for our 15 minutes of fame, and what we're doing to ourselves when we consume said content. —Carlos A. Molina

The Stranger / L'Étranger
Looks can be deceiving in François Ozon's *The Stranger*. Adapted from Albert Camus' celebrated novella about a man who kills without real reason, Ozon's 2025 reinterpretation presents a beautiful boy whose shining facade hides a heart of stone. We meet Benjamin Voisin's Meursault just after he learns of his mother's death. His response—that of pure indifference—signals something off about the young man. Bathed in the Algerian sun, statuesque and wide-eyed, Meursault attracts others like moths to a flame. Within a day of his mother's burial, he begins

an affair with his impossibly forgiving ex-coworker, Marie, and strikes up a friendship with his hot-blooded neighbor, Raymond. After being pulled in a little too close to Raymond's abusive, violent orbit, Meursault commits murder, a crime that causes his community to question his character. Shot in milky black-and-white and accompanied by a tense, droning score, Ozon immerses us in Meursault's uncaring world with a coolness that can be at once riveting and a little too removed. Camus' novel functioned as an inquiry into France's colonial indifference, and while Ozon attempts to foreground the racism and injustice faced by Algerians, he struggles to thread its varying interests. Its moments of loose surrealism butt up against the moral melodrama driving the film's last half. Much like Meursault, *The Stranger* meanders and observes, but when it tries to confront the ethical dilemmas at the center of its story, its icy remove fails to give way to a sense of real emotion at its core. —Zain Hashmat

DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

Dahomey

When something is stolen, can what was taken be truly returned? This is the central question of *Dahomey*, Mati Diop's 2024 docu-fiction hybrid chronicling the repatriation of 26 historical objects and their journey from France back to their homeland of Dahomey, now the Republic of Benin. There's a tender touch and sense of fantasy to *Dahomey*'s filmmaking. Diop doesn't just take us through the shipping, set up, and exhibition of these artworks and artifacts; she breathes life into the process and attempts to take

a look at every perspective of this generational moment. "Everything is so strange. Far removed from the country I saw in my dreams," states the statue of King Ghezo, voiced by Makenzy Orcel in an electronic, humming register that feels both perfectly ancient and futuristic. And the future of Benin is what's being considered with these artifacts. Halfway through the film, Diop pulls us into a debate among students at the University of Abomey-Calavi, their passionate outlooks on the objects' historical return ranging from seeing them as treasures finally coming home to being nothing more than a political move from the French as a means to improve their waning standing in Africa. Diop's roving filmmaking swings us back and forth from the students to the statues with a sharp sense of dialectic and a probing curiosity. It's clear that this homecoming is a step towards patching up generations of damage, but it leaves us with no doubt that there's still much work to be done. —Zain Hashmat

ANIMATED FEATURES

The Most Precious of Cargoes La plus précieuse des marchandises

Oscar winner Michel Hazanavicius's *The Most Precious of Cargoes*, an adaptation of a novel of the same name, uses gorgeous animation to tell a harrowing modern fairy tale about a couple in the woods who finds a baby thrown from an Auschwitz-bound train. It premiered and competed for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2024, a rare but deserved feat for an animated feature. The use of light and the depiction of nature achieve an almost whimsical effect, giving a hint of magical realism to this woodland tale in which any frame would make a stunning standalone painting. The falling snow, the animals, the cooing baby, the family by the hearth, are all just beautiful. It also uses the power of animation to depict the atrocities and suffering in the death camps, with nightmarish imagery that simultaneously accentuates and softens the true nature of what happened, while following the baby's father's journey. These parallel stories lead us to a

heartbreaking end, with a coda of narration that admonishes deniers while laying out a message of hope and love—fitting for our modern times. —Carlos A. Molina

NARRATIVE SHORTS



Two People Exchanging Saliva Deux Personnes échangeant de la Salive

There's a good chance by the time you're reading this or seeing it at the French Film Festival, *Two People Exchanging Saliva* will have won the Oscar for Best Live Action Short Film. It's nominated and has already won at numerous other festivals after debuting at the Telluride Film Festival in 2024. In a dystopian future that doesn't look entirely different from our own, kissing is illegal and replaced by slaps to the face. The rich have deep cheek bruises. Halitosis gains you access to your workplace like a demented COVID fever scan. Toothpaste and toothbrushes are contraband, and surreptitiously brushing your teeth suggests drug users tying one off in a McDonald's bathroom. Cardboard coffins are tossed in a pit over the muffled protestations coming from within. There's social commentary through symbolism, from the character names (Malaise, Chagrin), to the black-and-white cinematography, to the checkered designer brand dresses evoking a QR code from hell. If that's not enough for you, there's also forbidden love and a *Showgirls*-esque storyline where the new kid on the block is replacing the old head. If this review leaves you curious, the short will only heighten the feeling. —Carlos A. Molina

ANIMATED SHORTS

Chasse Galerite

In one of Brian Hawkins' tall tale interpretations about the isolated French-speaking Missouri settlers of the 1700s, the crafty title character hunts, manifests his identity, and



The Neighbors

finds love in a story that echoes the true history surrounding its events. Settling the area after the expedition of Louis Jolliet and Jacques Marquette, the French came to find home and community alongside the Indigenous peoples of modern-day Missouri. Potentially based on a real person by the name of Michel Occoult, this rich retelling may be the origin story of the Métis, officially recognized children of marriages between Missouri French Creole settlers and Indigenous peoples. In a stunning historical twist revealed at the close of the film, the audience is left to marvel at the parallels the story has to history, and wonder how tall the tale really is. With surreal imagery illustrated in watercolor and stop-motion paper puppetry, *Chasse Galerite* is a lesson in how things that occur in time and nature have a tendency to come back around. —Terra Durio

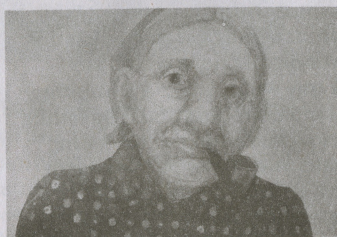
Irish Washerwoman

La Vieille femme qui lave

In Brian Hawkins' *The Irish Washerwoman*, the musical tradition of the Missouri French Creole is portrayed in fluid watercolor. As the audience watches an old woman do her laundry, entrancing fiddle tunes offer them a glimpse into the cultural soundscape of the old days. Preserved in recordings made with the help of the Missouri Friends of the Folk Arts, the instrumental stylings of *The Irish Washerwoman* are a lovely accompaniment to the oral interpretations of Hawkins' short film catalog. —Terra Durio

The Neighbors | Les Vouèsins

A hauntingly beautiful animated short film by Brian Hawkins, *The Neighbors* is adapted from a popular oral folktale of the isolated French-speaking Creole community of Old Mines, Missouri. As the restless trickster Petit Jean torments his formidable neighbor Grand Guiable, enough never proves to be enough. It was transcribed phonetically in the 1930s at the peak of its popularity, as told by master storyteller (*conteur*) Frank "Boy" Bourisaw. Hawkins narrates the film as one person with many voices, depicting the tale in rich watercolor and animated stop-motion paper puppetry. A curious rumination on trust and community, the tale's dark undertones are accentuated by Nicolas Snyder's vividly ominous soundtrack (thoughtfully informed by the Missouri Friends of the Folk Arts). In this rich interpretation, Hawkins' deft distillation captures the essence of imaginative storytelling in one of the most unique animated films I have ever seen. —Terra Durio



The 29th New Orleans French Film Festival runs from March 19 through March 24 at the Prytania Theatre Uptown and venues across the city. For more info, check out neworleansfilmsociety.org/french-film-festival.



KATIE SIKORA

Quelle Surprise!

A Q&A with French Film Festival Artistic Director Clint Bowie

by Carlos A. Molina

Clint Bowie was a connoisseur of the film scene in Chicago, Paris, and Portland, Oregon before finally settling here in New Orleans, and has been involved with the French Film Festival for more than half of its history. Bowie sat down with me to discuss this year's fest, the curation process, and some of his favorite memories of FFF's past.

Let's talk about the selection process. I see you've got a decent balance of newer films and older films. How do you go about choosing the lineup? How is it different from the New Orleans Film Festival?

It's very different from what the process is like for the New Orleans Film Festival. That one is overwhelmingly submissions based, so we have a call for submissions

from filmmakers all over the world. We have a team of over a dozen people and volunteer screeners to help with that process of trying to identify and create something from a giant pool of submissions. This is a little different, more direct curation. We are looking at French language films—that's a priority for the festival—and for films that have screened at other festivals or that we've

been made aware of through our connections within filmmaking communities. We work with sales agents, U.S. distributors, production companies, cast as wide a net as possible to identify French language films that we think could be a good fit. This year we looked at around 70 total films, and I think we're going to show 18, including shorts. I don't have the team that I have for New Orleans Film Festival—this is mainly me and some other members of our full-time staff. For the New Orleans Film Festival, we might have upwards of seven programmers looking at a given feature before it's programmed. This one's much different. Sometimes I'm watching a film and making a decision.

I see you've got some Jean Cocteau films and *The Stranger*. How'd you choose some of the older films?

We're showing two Cocteau films: *Orpheus* and *Beauty and the Beast*. We really want to ensure that we're connecting the lineage of French language cinema to its past to try and encourage audiences to identify not only where French cinema is today, but also where it's come from. This happens to be the 80th anniversary of *Beauty and the Beast* so that was on our mind as a potential film to include. Then there's some obvious connections to *Orpheus* in New Orleans. This year we're also bringing Chloë Cassens, an international scholar on Jean Cocteau, to come provide introductions to those films and also lead a discussion on the art of fairytale and film as seen through Cocteau. She's actually the granddaughter of someone who was the world's preeminent collector of Jean Cocteau's works and helped to establish a Jean Cocteau museum in France.

What contemporary films are you looking forward to?

There's some really strong films in the mix. I'm particularly drawn to a film called *Nino* that played at the Cannes Film Festival. It's a very introspective film about one person who's experiencing a diagnosis over the course of several days and internalizing that, trying to go about his

regular life, but also absorb that heaviness. I feel it's very connected to *Cléo from 5 to 7*, a similar introspective look at someone who's contemplating the potential of some heavy medical diagnosis as well. I think there's a really interesting play of the past and the present too within that film, it definitely has a lot of references to the Agnès Varda film, and it's such a heartfelt and moving piece of work... *Dahomey* looks at Benin culture, particularly art, and is connected to the world of francophone culture and history through colonialism. This film certainly reframes how I think the story of France's connection to West Africa has been told over the years.

Do you get to pull from a lot of local filmmakers or local actors?

We try to, as much as possible. We've got a film that was made right here in Louisiana about zydeco music and

language festivals in the country, that's for sure, and one of the oldest language-specific film festivals in the country. I think that this festival has a dedicated audience. There are people who come back year after year who will watch every single film in the festival, and that's always really exciting for us, to kind of reengage with that audience and see them year after year. That's something that does set this one apart. It is difficult to get artists to this festival just given that many of them are international and it can be really costly. But we are excited to have several visiting filmmakers this year. One who will be joining us from Quebec [Anne Émond], she's the director of *Peak Everything*, which was actually the closing night film at the Toronto International Film Festival last year. We'll have the filmmakers of the film *Built on Zydeco* in attendance. We'll have several filmmakers of short films at

"There are a lot of connections to Louisiana and there's certainly a lot of Louisiana talent represented in some of these films."

that was in part funded by #CreateLouisiana, which is an initiative to help fund films and Louisiana-based filmmakers. *Built On Zydeco* will showcase the history of Creole music in Louisiana and the French language voices and music that are still working today. So that's super exciting. We're also going to be showing *Convulsions*, a French language film that's from a Baton Rouge-based filmmaker [Adrien Picquenot, Pierrot du Saillant]. He's actually French and lives in Baton Rouge. *Who Will Remember Us*—there's another short film that was actually made by a group of filmmakers who are based in Quebec, but came down to Louisiana to make their film. So there are a lot of connections to Louisiana and there's certainly a lot of Louisiana talent represented in some of these films.

What else makes the French Film Festival so unique?

It's one of the oldest French

the festival, and try to build as many opportunities as possible for audiences to learn from artists about their process and their inspirations.

What are some of your favorite memories from festivals past?

There's nothing like seeing a film at Uptown Prytania. The screen is so big, it's immersive. It's the best place to really get lost in a film, I think. I have so many great memories of watching films. This was probably 10 years ago, but I remember we showed a film, *Farewell, My Queen*, at noon on a Monday and there was a literal line wrapping around the block. Almost sold that screen out at the Prytania, which is hard to do. It's 250-odd seats and that was when I was working with my colleague at the time, John Desplas, who has since passed away. I remember him counting the people—going back and forth, counting the open seats and then counting

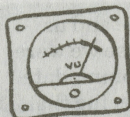
the people in the line and us being amazed because we were not prepared to accommodate that many people. Seeing that kind of reaction, I mean we see that regularly with the French Film Festival in particular: people coming for a film that's not a Hollywood film, does not have big names, but people are just really looking for exciting, independent, arty films. Being able to provide an audience with that is always exciting. Also, I have such fond memories of working with John Desplas who I think a lot of people associate the French Film Festival with. He was with the organization since it started in 1989. I think the French Film Festival was kind of his baby. He was such a mentor to me and I love John so much. We talked on the phone every single day up until the day he passed. I can't think of the French Film Festival or even work on the French Film Festival without reflecting on our time together and all of his contributions to this community and to the organization specifically.

I saw that you spent some time in France during college.

There's something special about French film and French language cinema. I think a lot of artists look to classic French cinema and also have an eye to what's happening in contemporary French language cinema, particularly through the Cannes Film Festival, so I do think there's something very relevant about French language cinema today. With the historical connections to Francophone culture, it makes a lot of sense for this festival to be in New Orleans.

How would you recommend someone tackle the French Film Festival?

This festival is fairly manageable from an audience perspective. I think the New Orleans Film Festival is much harder to navigate. There's so many more films and things that are competing. But this festival, given that it's at [mostly] one venue, only one film showing at a time, I would dive in. I don't think you can go wrong, really. Take a chance on something you've never heard of that features no one you've ever heard of. You might be surprised.



SOUND CHECK

by Sabrina Stone

EVAN MARTIN & MOLLY GRAHAM PART I: EVAN



SABRINA STONE

Evan Martin doesn't love talking about himself. He doesn't have a website, doesn't seek the spotlight, and doesn't play instruments on stage. In fact, when he's doing his job right, you might not even see him. What you will notice is that everyone around him sounds phenomenal. The bands he's recorded (Zita, Headbone, Sweetheart, Wolfe Johns) and the artists he's toured with (The Rumble, David Shaw, The Revivalists, Hans Williams) all keep hiring him again and again. He does everything you could need and he does it without drama. He'll set up and break down stages, run sound systems and monitors, liaise with venues, tour manage, and even drive the band van without taking breaks.

His partner Molly Graham also works in production but has a different approach. She can often be found front and center, speaking on comms radios, hawking merch, setting up lighting, promoting causes she cares about on the mic, and even jumping up on stage with her violin. Evan and Molly's dynamic makes them a well-balanced team, personally and professionally.

When I arrived at their Uptown home, I was first greeted by their two cats, Pablo Picasso and George Gershwin. Evan said, "Hello," and then immediately left the room to go find Molly, who had just baked a cake, sewed a costume, and cooked a pot of red beans and rice. While Evan meandered back towards the couch, Molly started the discourse.

Molly Graham: I think what makes Evan good at his job is that he makes people feel comfortable and when you're performing, you can be very uncomfortable. You're vulnerable on stage and Evan is a great listener and empathetic, so even when a performer

isn't saying exactly what they need, he can pick up on things from their body language. He anticipates needs really well. It's one of the most important aspects of both of our jobs. We're solution-oriented, so when we get in disagreements personally, it's never a fight. It's

always a question of, "What did you need from me to not make you feel like that?"

Did you two meet on tour?

Evan Martin: Yes. With David Shaw.

So, would you get him to be your officiant? And would he be shirtless?

MG: David would probably love that. We would say, "You have to wear clothes." The first time we ever met, Evan was working in the sound booth at the Maple Leaf. I took a picture of him and

"Studio work is like a chisel: You're really thinking about things and being purposeful with the chisel. And then live work is just a jackhammer. Do it. Get it done. Make it happen."

sent it to him, and we chatted a little bit. And then when we went on the David Shaw tour we just became really close and loved spending time together and would order in, stay on the bus, go out, watch movies, play games. We'd go hang out on our off days. All the guys would be making plans and Evan would text me like, "Did you want to go to the steakhouse with the guys?" And I'd be like, "Not particularly." And he'd be like, "Sick! Me neither." When we got home, I remember still texting and talking every day even though we were done working together.

It sounds like the way you two met, on the road, actually translated to the reasons you're successful as a couple.

EM: Almost directly.

MG: We help each other. If I'm assistant tour managing for The Revivalists and I'm trying to bring everything from the green room to the bus or need help with merch or VIP or stocking the van, Evan's the first person to come and help me. And if he has a question about who his best contacts at the venue are gonna be, I'll point out who he needs. We complement each other because my skills are with people and logistics and Evan's are technical and mechanical, so we make a good team when we're on the road... and off the road.

How do you balance both being out of town so often?

MG: When we first moved in, we maybe saw each other for two days in two months.

EM: We missed each other at the airport. I would leave for a two-week in the morning and she would get back from a three-week at night.

MG: There were a couple times where I was like, "Maybe I'll get to see him at the airport because my flight goes out the day his comes in." But then my flight would land early and we missed each other a bunch of times. It works well for us, though. We're both 26, so we both encourage each other to do our own things.

EM: And we need money. Rent is not free!

OK, Molly, I'm kicking you out. Your interview is going in next month's edition, so the floor is Evan's now. Tell me about your company, Evan. It's called Dynamic Sound. I'll go wherever sound is needed and really do whatever for anyone who needs a mixing board, pole speakers, wedges, and some microphones.

You've always been an engineer, never a musician. That's pretty unusual.

Yeah. I started doing DJ stuff when I was 13 and my mom found a class that taught me about live sound when I was about 14 or 15. Then I studied audio at NOCCA and now I just record music and do live sound.

Have you ever had any non-music jobs?

I washed dishes for two years at Midway Pizza on Freret Street when I was in high school, but by the time I got to college, when I was 19, I managed to pay rent through music, which was a big deal.

Did you continue to study music engineering in school?

Yeah, but I've been ahead of the curve at school my entire academic life. I've always just figured stuff out on the internet and then been an assistant to the teacher by default. At Loyola, I didn't really learn about engineering so much as I helped teach the classes.

So, really, they should have been paying your tuition. Tuition was free for me, so, they

were. That ended up getting me a job at the Maple Leaf, which expanded my opportunities to the entire scene here.

One of my first interviews for this column, Cam Smith, said that the Maple Leaf was the trickiest room he's ever done sound for. What is it that makes it so difficult?

It's just ear-blisteringly loud. It's really loud. It hurts. It's a long rectangle so it's like a sound cannon from the stage. It's also got metal-lined walls, harsh and reflective, super unforgiving when there's no bodies in the room.

So the more people there, the better it sounds?

Yeah. Human flesh between the speaker and the hard surface helps.

That is an incredibly serial killer-y way to phrase that.

What can I say? Humans absorb frequencies. We do! That's what seeing and hearing is.

You worked on The Rumble's Grammy-nominated *Live At The Maple Leaf*?

I was assistant to Mack [Major] on the day of recording and helped plug in microphones to facilitate recording, which I'm sure was very helpful, but I didn't touch it in post-production and I wouldn't claim any footprint over the sound of that record.

Do you feel like the recording accurately represents what it's like to be at one of their live shows?

Yeah, definitely. It's hard to convey *how loud* The Rumble is at the Maple Leaf though. It's like being at a gun range without ear protection. And that's not even digging on The Rumble. Anyone with a loud drummer and two horns in the Maple Leaf is gonna sound like that. When there's two or three hundred people in there, it's nice sometimes. Really high loudness with a bunch of bodies in there can sound really good.

I've only been to three concerts since I've been home this year and you've been running sound on two of them, one at Marigny Opera House and one in a backyard, so when I see you, it's most often a view of you walking past me, face in an iPad, adjusting levels.

That's where people will normally find me.

Are you able to control almost everything with an iPad?

Yeah, everything that doesn't need to be physically plugged in with my hands. A lot of soundboards will have remote capability, so it's the app for whatever soundboard you're using. I'm gonna be using a Midas M32 most of the time [the M32-Mix app with that soundboard]. It's what's at most bars and mid-level venues in America.

Do any mixing boards intimidate you?

DiGiCos. They just cost a quarter of a million dollars, so I never get to touch them. I'm not afraid to mess them up, per se. It's gonna be fine. It's all just EQ.

how I want it. But a lot of times I'm not just walking in and being like, "Cool. Let's go." I'm usually getting the band in there and being a liaison between the band and the stage crew. In town, I'm usually also doing monitors. If I need to get the stage set up, if I'm the one plugging everything in and arranging it as to the plot, I need about two and a half hours. In the case where you're traveling with the same soundboard, the same speakers, and the same microphones, then the amount of time you need is the amount of time it takes to plug it all in, plus 20 minutes.

As a musician, I get enraged when I'm denied a sound



NATHAN SCHWEITZER

Recording with Zita at Loyola's studio, June 2024.

compression, preamp, routing. It's kind of like a kitchen: knives and forks. You know everything in the kitchen, you just don't know where it is. It's like when you cook in someone else's house and you have to find the slotted spoon and it takes 40 minutes.

The joke is when you go to a rich person's house...

And you're like, "Where's your garbage can?" A DiGiCo is a rich person's kitchen. It's the industry standard if you're a big artist who goes on a lot of tours. I use an M32 most nights, and that's about five grand, which is very affordable.

How long do you typically need to set up the sound in a new venue, when you're touring?

If I'm just mixing front of house, I need however long sound check takes, about 40 minutes before the set, to configure the board

check and have to just start performing cold or only get a few minutes to line check.

What's your feeling about line checks?

When I'm on monitors, I hate it, because I would not have time to bring out the monitors and I gotta hear feedback to take it out, so there's always gonna be a first time that you hear feedback until I get to fix it, and you want that time to be *before* the show, not during. When I'm doing front of house, there's less opportunity for feedback but I definitely feel miffed, bamboozled, when I'm mixing a show for hundreds or thousands of people and I didn't get the sound check. It's like, "Come on. This represents my ability to mix to all of these people." It sucks but being a pro is also being like, "Whatever," and having the ability to deal with it and move on.

Because my last Sound Check interview was with Valerie Sassyfrass, wireless microphones have been on my mind. I remember asking you about them and you having strong opinions on the matter.

Yeah. They're impossible to make sound good. It's just a super tiny diaphragm condenser mic which is usually hanging here [on the cheek, not right in front of the mouth], so if you're in a rock band, what you'll pick up is just gonna be drums. That's already what every vocal mic in a rock band is—just cymbals, unless it's a loud singer, right on the mic. It's the reason why it's mostly pastors and corporate stuff with no drum kits where you see those mics employed, 'cause it's an omnidirectional microphone, so it captures in a circle. *Forget* about putting that in a monitor in front of you. It'll never be loud enough to hear but I like the form factor. If it sounded like a Shure SM58 it'd be on every person, but it doesn't.

What's the difference, for you, in the way you do live sound versus studio recordings?

Making records is art that lingers. You have to go home and think about it. When a live show's done, it's done. It already happened. You can make mistakes or do things on a live show that make you think, "I'll remember that" and then not, but when you go home with an album that isn't done... Studio work is like a chisel: You're really thinking about things and being purposeful with the chisel. And then live work is just a jackhammer. Do it. Get it done. Make it happen. When you start off a project you're like, "I'm so excited. This is gonna be so sweet. I'm the best. Everything's awesome." And then every project ends like, "Just get it out. Fuck it. Just release it." That's, like, every project I work on. So lately I've been getting good at helping artists not get too caught up in the minutia of their projects, and then you get better at that and you just make more albums. You'll pretty much never listen to an album you've made and be like, "We don't have to do anything to this." If you ever get done with a record and

cont'd on pg. 50

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Artist Lodge Mardi Gras Tape Vol. 3

by Elisa Gomez



To understand *Mardi Gras Tape Volume 3* is to first understand its creator. Chris Booth—frontman of indie band Mango, professional jazz musician, and producer of the *Mardi Gras Tape* series—has a home studio set up in his bedroom. A classical piano sits against the wall with two electric pianos stacked over its keys. Soundboards, synths, microphones, wires, guitars, and tambourines crowd the space, but his Fostex Model 80 reel-to-reel takes center stage.

While visiting San Francisco in 2020, Booth wanted to explore multitracking and tape recording and seized an opportunity to purchase a tape machine on Facebook Marketplace. Unable to borrow a car, he braved the North Bay hills to pick it up, going way too fast and hauling it home on his skateboard, only dropping it once—a future Mardi Gras miracle.

The idea for the mixtape project came during Mardi Gras 2024, when Booth stumbled home at 2 a.m. from Big Dicks House of Big Boobs, a DIY party strip club, wanting to invite friends over to record music on his new tape machine. During those two weeks of Mardi Gras, he made it a point to fold music-making with friends into the festivities. Since then, the *Mardi Gras Tape*

has become a much-anticipated collaboration, drawing artists across genres into its archive of music and time.

Participants this year included industrial experimentalist Law Noise, singer-songwriter Sari Jordan, Slade Warnken (singer and synth player of Drugstore Lipstick), and chef Shawn Wee of pop-up Wukong Ramen. Booth even made room on the tape for someone with no musical background—me.

I first saw Booth's project last year through his Instagram Stories and watched collaborations from across genres. I remember thinking it was the coolest concept. This year, I saw the open invitation for *Mardi Gras Tape Volume 3* and decided to try my hand at making a song. I reached out to see if there was room for an inexperienced creative to be archived on the tape. To my surprise, he was excited to collaborate and scheduled my first jam session for the night of February 3rd.

When I came over, Booth already had an idea for a dark, goth-leaning synthwave track (yum). He built beats on his drum machine and layered notes on his keyboard. I slowly delivered a passage from the sci-fi novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz* in a melancholic tone. By the end of the night, I had my own song chronicled on this year's *Mardi Gras Tape*.

On February 11, I returned to Booth's studio to sit in on the season's 13th recording session, this time with the folk band Grape Candy. Frontwoman Grape "Grace" Candy—a historian, musician, and actor from Massachusetts—says you can find her at the New Orleans Pharmacy Museum, calling the marriage of her loves "bardcore." She moved to New Orleans in 2016 after earning her BFA in theatre from Boston University and joined the traditional Eastern European-inspired choir Trendafilka, which translates to "rose" in Bulgarian. Wanting to form a rock band of her own, she recruited Lily Fein (her bandmate in The Glue & Whip Appeal) and her friend Howe Persimmon, and they have been rocking together for three years.

Grape reached out to Booth out of a love for collaboration and improv, which is the essence of the project itself. Between rehearsals, she mentioned how their practices are often called "Grape jams," crediting Persimmon with the term. His response: "Anything I've said, you can have it. If anyone takes my song, they're in danger of becoming a friend of mine."

The song they built on the spot carried simple but earnest lyrics: "If you want it you better go and get it, but you better get it right now / If you want it, you're never gonna get it unless you go and get it right now."

As a native of the city, I've seen many a Mardi Gras, each phase of my life marked by a new crowd. People come and go. The city reshapes itself into something familiar in ritual but foreign in faces. Now that I live in "The Box," New Orleans' Bermuda Triangle, I've developed a healthy cynicism for the season. Blasphemy, I know. Try navigating blocked streets, waiting until 10:30 p.m. to get home, or leaving two hours early so you don't get trapped.

Working with Booth and sitting in with Grape Candy reminded me what these two weeks can be if you relax into the torrent.



COLBY BALDWIN

The idea for the mixtape project came during Mardi Gras 2024, when Booth stumbled home at 2 a.m. from Big Dicks House of Big Boobs, a DIY party strip club, wanting to invite friends over to record music on his new tape machine.

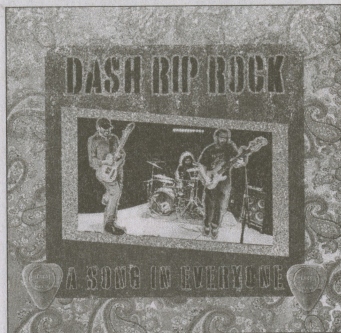
Grape enjoys tape because it feels akin to film—"it sits better in your system." She compared it to LED light versus the glow of an incandescent bulb. Fein added that tape gives the music warmth. Persimmon likened it to electricity versus the internet: electricity as something natural, the internet as a contortion of that phenomenon that loses connective tissue despite its accessibility. He said tape makes you commit. You're less precious with the process and take the moment for what it is. All these descriptions point to human imperfection—hiss, wear, damage—the qualities that make something feel real and touchable.

If you allow it, you can feel the magic a collective conjures through shared experience—the way community seeks itself out, both foreign and familiar. Three years ago, drunk on spirits, Booth felt a call to commune and open his space. That instinct has let him meet artists in his orbit he might never have crossed paths with otherwise, documenting improvised, raw humanity onto a spinning reel-to-reel.

Mardi Gras Tape Volume 3 is currently being mastered and should be released in late March. For more info, check out mardigrastapes.bandcamp.com. For more on Alt Scene NOLA, check out [@altscenenola](https://www.instagram.com/altscenenola) on Instagram.



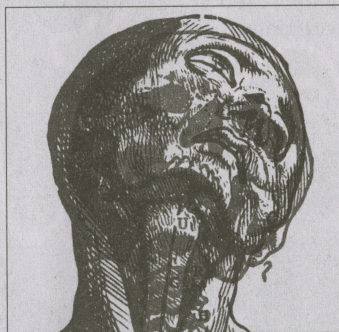
REVIEWS



DASH RIP ROCK A SONG IN EVERYONE (DIAL BACK SOUND)

Bandleader, guitarist, and sole original member Bill Davis has put in a lot of miles over the course of Dash Rip Rock's four-decade-long run, but don't mistake his band for an old clunker. Dash's current incarnation—which features drummer Wade Hymel and bassist Izzy Grisoli alongside Davis—weaves in and out of lanes with great proficiency on *A Song In Everyone*. The frantic “2 Much 2 Do” and the fiery “Hell & Back” turn the band's signature cowpunk rock'n'roll into fuel-guzzling speed chases. In contrast, their slow take on Scott Long's “River” runs deep with emotion as Davis looks his own mortality in the face, proclaiming his desire to be buried in the river and that “When I die, I'll be free forever.” The band continues to expand their palette in new directions, such as fusing Huey “Piano” Smithesque keys with The Beatles' “Mean Mr. Mustard.” Dash recorded *A Song In Everyone* at the former Fat Possum studio in Water Valley, Mississippi under the guidance of Drive-By Trucker Matt Patton, who encouraged the band to abandon guitar pedals and embrace the

maximum impact of simplicity. He also encouraged the band to namecheck Rush Limbaugh on the catchy upbeat single turned drugged-out downer “Pain Pills Never Expire.” Even after all these years, Dash Rip Rock are continuing to make albums that remind us why Davis earned a spot in the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. —William Archambeault



MANDY, INDIANA URGH (SACRED BONES)

As the weaponization of technology against the citizenry of the world accelerates at an alarming pace, Mancunian industrial noise punk quartet Mandy, Indiana reminds us of the radical roots of electronic music. *URGH*, their second full-length, does not shy away from the band's commitment to interrogating power at all levels through their music. The songs on *URGH* hit you in the mind and viscera, urging you to move both literally and metaphorically. Lead singer Valentine Caulfield mostly sings in her native French, allowing her tone and the accompanying music to provide context clues for anyone unfamiliar. Discordant synths and beats accompany jagged guitar work as Caulfield

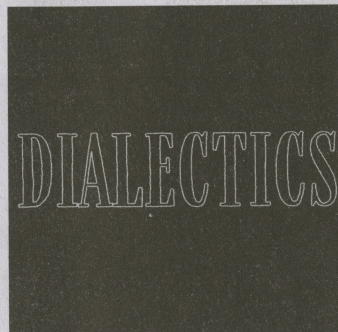
interrogates structural violence at all levels: from rape culture (“I'll Ask Her”) to the ongoing genocide in Gaza (“†st halt so”). On “Life Hex,” the *light as a feather, stiff as a board* scene from *The Craft* is sampled as Caulfield rages against the realities of growing up in a sexist society, amplified by the frenzied playing of drummer Alex Macdougall and guitarist Scott Fair. *URGH* is a complex and powerful album that compels you to stare down the encroaching apocalyptic forces. On “Dodecahedron,” Caulfield directly addresses us, the listeners, on where we stand as fascism rises and the world burns. Translated from the French, she demands: “Do you want to be remembered / As someone who clapped as the bombs rained down? ...Stand up and march.” —Mary Beth Campbell

rock to a lighter pop sound is a pattern they follow on all seven tracks of *Dialectics*. The songs are catchy and polished, but it feels as though they are playing it safe when the doom rock and grunge elements are actually what make the songs more interesting. Since they have a history of reinvention, hopefully they will learn to embrace this side of their music on future projects. —Mary Beth Campbell



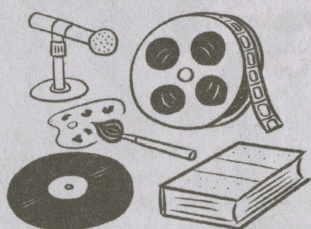
LAURA FISHER CONDUIT / TRACES (SELF-RELEASE)

Conduit / Traces, the latest double single from multi-hyphenate and New Orleans scene stalwart Laura Fisher (affiliated projects include Avery Island BCE, loucey, Lyla George, and People Museum), has been waiting to make its debut for years. Written and recorded over a decade ago, the dark, ethereal pop songs are deftly crafted. Sweet melodies are offset by ominous drones and introspective lyrics, creating a dreamlike and almost surreal atmosphere—Fisher cites Björk, Portishead, and David Lynch among the influences for these songs. Think of *Conduit / Traces* as a two-chapter philosophical novella. On opener “Conduit,” industrial beats accompany Fisher's clear vocals as she meditates on the question, “why can't we be / a conduit - but not the flesh?” before seamlessly transitioning into “Traces,” which changes focus to a more personal narrative (“Weaving my web / between satellites / can you feel me? / are you caught yet?”). Fisher does not provide answers but instead has created a mysterious, heady musical world that invites the listener to take the time to delve in and engage in their own interpretation and contemplation of the music and the connections it forms in their own mind. —Mary Beth Campbell



MARS & OTHER PLANETS DIALECTICS (LIGHT DRIZZLE)

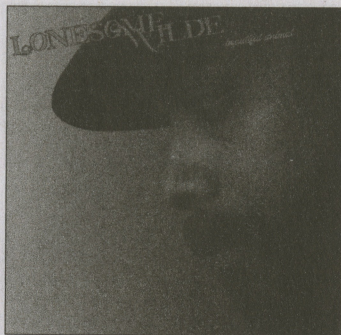
Power pop trio Mars & Other Planets is part of the new wave of female-fronted projects in the New Orleans independent music scene. Since their founding by frontperson Marissa Douglas in 2023, the band has undergone several iterations. Originally conceived as a folk rock project, the band's sound has moved on to progressive power pop and rock with musical theatre undertones. With their latest release, *Dialectics*, Mars & Other Planets delves into a slightly heavier sound, tapping influences from doom metal, grunge, and '90s alternative. Opening track “Fever” starts with a sludgy guitar line, keys, and heavy drums before settling into darker pop. “Turnouts” invokes Concrete Blonde, the blues, and David Bowie in his glam rock years through the filter of a musical theatre kid. This transition from darker



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**LONESOME WILDE
BEAUTIFUL ANIMAL
(SELF-RELEASE)**

Micah McKee has been part of the indie scene in New Orleans for over 20 years. From Silent Cinema to Little Maker and Empress Hotel—just to name a few of his bands—he has brought his songwriting gift to almost every dusty little bar the city has to offer. On his latest solo release under the moniker Lonesome Wilde, McKee aims to capture the contradictions of being human—in his words, “how beauty and chaos can exist side by side.” The album opens with “Sugar in the Dust,” an atmospheric track that starts with sparse acoustics before the piano and drums come tumbling in alongside McKee’s salt-of-the-earth vocals (though he’s employing more growl than I’ve heard him use in the past). “Beautiful Animal” follows with a polished early aughts indie feel before “Chamomile” enters, a tender and intimate love song clocking in at just over a minute. Standout track “Whispers of Endymion” is up next and it’s the most layered offering on the album, featuring Revivalists guitarist Zack Feinberg. From here, things take a bit of a turn. “Mean Man” comes in a bit jarring with the synths, but on the other hand it shows the most dominant and commanding vocals of any track on the record. “Abundances Pt. 2” is fully instrumental and while it’s a pleasant track, it feels a bit odd in the sequencing. “Heart in the Street” brings us back to that polished indie feel. Then “Miracle by Degrees” plunges us back into indie folk before “Gravity’s Darling” scales the coaster into the big sound of heavy piano and distorted vocals (some excellent horn and percussion work on this one as well). The album ends with “Scratch the Record” (country folk), “Crown of Atoms” (back

to atmospheric indie), and “Where I Leave You” (a folksy strummer clocking in under two minutes). At numerous points in the record, I found myself reflecting that it couldn’t seem to make up its mind about what it wanted to be. I imagine this was an intentional choice to highlight the theme of contradictions in the human experience. And while all of the component pieces are enjoyable—and some are exquisite—the pacing choices took me out of the moment more than once. McKee calls this record his most personal to-date, and you can feel that when you listen to the songs individually. I think they’ll be beautiful when performed live and selections from the record are compelling, even if the full album experience as a whole is a little disjointed.
—Erin Hall



**LYLA GEORGE
SOUP FOR LUNCH
(TOOTHFLY)**

As someone who came up in a time when indie music was still very much white, cis male-dominated—with all the issues inherent in that sort of environment—it is refreshing and beautiful to see the tides begin to change, especially in this fraught time in human history. Singer-songwriter Lyla George is part of this new and exciting era in New Orleans music, as was made evident at her packed album release show in January. *Soup for Lunch* is a lushly produced collection of introspective and witty songs, veering more into the experimental than standard guitar-driven indie rock. George is not afraid to play around with genre—elements of psychedelic, trip-hop, folk, orchestral pop, and dream pop can all be heard woven throughout the album. Standout tracks include the groovy and sneakily existential “loose ends” and “the alchemist,”

Webb's

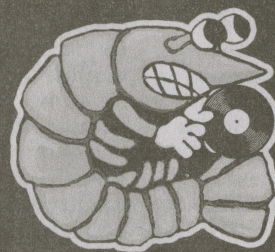
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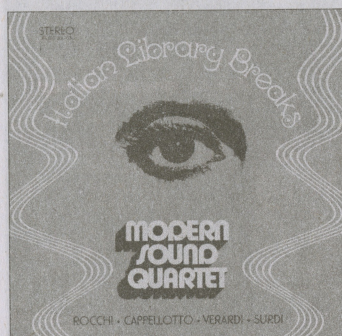


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which invokes both Andrew Bird and *The Bends*-era Radiohead. While George draws from specific experiences in her early 20s, there is a gravity and maturity to the songs that make them universal. *Soup for Lunch* succeeds in reimagining indie rock for a different time and reality—it is music made by an artist interested in a greater world and community instead of the male-dominated navel gazing of yore. —Mary Beth Campbell



**MODERN SOUND QUARTET
ITALIAN LIBRARY BREAKS
(FOUR FLIES)**

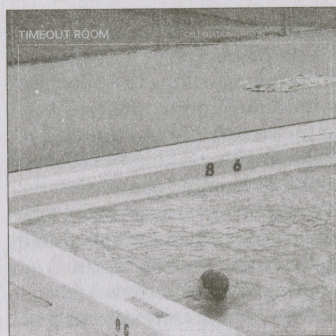
Library music popped its head above ground in the '90s and 2000s when DJs hunting for distinguishing beats began to look beyond rare R&B, funk, and jazz. Library music refers to music literally made for music libraries that television and movie producers could visit when they didn't have the budget to commission soundtrack music. The recently reissued *Italian Library Breaks* by the Modern Sound Quartet (MSQ) illustrates the genre's charms. The 10 tracks on this box set of five seven-inch singles have just enough personality to make magic when paired with the right scene, but not so much that it might distract. There's no signature sound because the MSQ varies moods, tempos, and grooves to create music that might suit different scenes and films. They're accomplished, but they rarely show off. Library music's heyday came during the mid-1960s to mid-1980s, and a lot of fetishized sounds that went in and out of vogue give these tracks life. The Moog solo in "Taurus" elevates a chase scene beat, and a breathy flute line combined with the pillowy chords on a Fender Rhodes electric piano suggests new love. MSQ's Oscar Rocchi and many of the library greats

should be thought of next to Willie Hutch, Isaac Hayes, and the artists who made Blaxploitation soundtracks because they display their creativity on the margins. The compositions work with very familiar building blocks, and we hear their creativity in the way they manipulate them into something new. —Alex Rawls



**OH DANG
BIG DOGS
(STRANGE DAISY)**

Although not expressly named or identified as such, the black dog of depression sits, eats, and sometimes snarls amongst its brothers in this new release from Oh Dang. This local five-piece have made a record that is brutally honest and intense, portraying a bristled frustration with both exterior and interior worlds. Opening with "OKC," both vocalists (Tyler Ryan and Harper Browman) question whether they can "make it out alive," before moving on to detail bouts of existential pain that feel pure rather than performative. With the clear influence of a country vocal combined with heavier guitars, the record veers between emotional states—from the gentler cut "Give Me Love," acting as a romantic confessional, to "Harddown" which seems to evoke the nuts and bolts of a full-scale breakdown, asking, "does anybody care where the hell I've been?" "Fires" announces the anguish of a break-up, asking almost sarcastically, "Ain't it so much easier without me?" The music tells us that we can never quite be sure. The record feels genuinely timely in a moment where solidarity and love feel more important than ever. With *Big Dogs*, Oh Dang has made something that feels like a blistering revelation of pain, a pain that appeals so irrevocably to mutual compassion. —Eva Karl



**TIMEOUT ROOM
CELEBRATION STATION
(TOUGH GUM)**

A songwriting device that never seems to get old is "sad lyrics over a happy tune." It's the emotional juxtaposition that makes a song like "Hey Ya!" by Outkast eternally great. Timeout Room's sophomore album, *Celebration Station*, is full of this kind of conflict, exploring escapism, depression, anxiety, and antisocial tendencies. Led by Stuart Taylor McCrary (a.k.a. S.T. McCrary) of Baton Rouge band Melters, this record sounds far more adeptly recorded and produced than Timeout Room's debut *Tight-Ass Goku Pictures*, which is flatter by comparison. That album was also weirder and more playful, with radio DJ skits and ad-libs, making it more outsider pop à la Daniel Johnston. While some of that is maintained on the new record (see "Mrs. McClintock's School of Fucking Drums"), *Celebration Station* delivers more of the infectious choruses, snotty vocals, and jangly guitars that made the debut so promising—like Gin Blossoms meets Mission of Burma. One track that stood out to me in particular was "All Away," an upbeat song about dead friends and coping with grief through denial. Despite best efforts to live in a dream, stubborn and casual reminders like abandoned buildings, out-of-service phone numbers, and old keys jolt McCrary back to reality. In this historical moment, it's tempting to fall into escapism. McCrary doesn't really offer a solution, but he does write some cathartic tunes. —Dalton Spangler

**TWISTED TEENS
BLAME THE CLOWN
(CHAIN SMOKING / JAZZ LIFE)**

New Orleans-based duo Twisted Teens refined their



signature blend of garage rock, punk, and country for their sophomore album *Blame The Clown*. Although an unofficial version existed on YouTube months prior, the official release poetically landed on Friday the 13th right before Mardi Gras Day and with far better production quality to boot. Despite being composed only of Caspian "CPN" Hollywell (who writes every part but steel guitar) and "Razor" Ramon Santos (the steel guitarist), Twisted Teens sound like a complete band from the weird mixture of fuzzy drums and crunchy guitar with egg punk-like synthetic drums and keys—all the while accented by Santos' harmonious steel co-starring Hollywell's raspy vocals. "Not Real" feels particularly poignant as a literal wake-up alarm, challenging (perhaps Hollywell himself) to embrace authenticity, especially when it's uncomfortable. Not to harp on the political moment too much, but this track's haggard delivery of lines like "this culture of conflict avoidance, creates people who internalize cowardice" stack again and again to create this painfully accurate picture of complacency today that is, in fact, so *real*. Twisted Teens didn't reinvent their sound on this record all that much, but they didn't need to. They just fully realized what the already solid debut and EP set up. —Dalton Spangler

**W-9
S/T (DEMO)
(SELF-RELEASE)**

I would not recommend doing your taxes to W-9's self-titled demo. In truth, I don't think any punk rock can soundtrack the civil duty of annually checking your adjusted gross income or calculating write-offs. In an even truer truth, tithing to



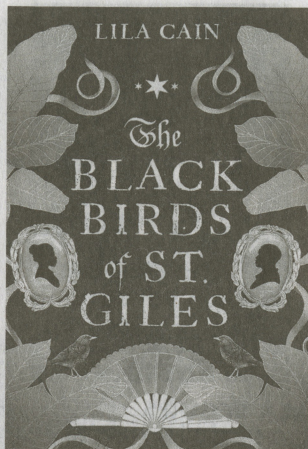
the federal government under the duress of state-sponsored violence doesn't have a punk vibe at all. However, theming the aesthetics of your band around the dry, gray culture of tax forms and the IRS does seem weirdly apt. In the Devo "Nu-Tra" phase kind of way, this band reclaims the mundane tax season that so rudely interrupts Carnival and makes it into something far less anxiety-inducing. Comprised of some all-star locals from various projects like T.A.C.K., Tonya, SPLITT, Guts Club, and Dre Perish (the man and the music), W-9 has a wiry sound thanks to its lo-fi, "demo" quality recording—softening the low-ends while sharpening the stringy guitars and fuzzy vintage phone vocals (also used by vocalist Emma Ledgerwood in T.A.C.K.). On the opener "Nun," killer guitar riffs spike over a thumping bass groove that lands with Ledgerwood's maniacal vocals and breaks down into a menacing chorus. Clattering drums, shrieking guitars, and snotty vocals continue on "Mommy," while "Bubble Gum Lady" features each band member playing off in different directions without the song totally unraveling. Although it's unlikely I'll get a refund from this brief demo, it does make me look forward to what the band files again next tax season.

—Dalton Spangler



**LILA CAIN
THE BLACKBIRDS
OF ST. GILES
(DAFINA)**

Historical fiction, crime, drama, boxing, an examination of race and class—*The Blackbirds of St. Giles* fills many niches. It's a novel set in 1780s London, but



the majority of the narrative doesn't take place in the ritzy upper crust of society where people wear powdered wigs and sip tea—most of it stays right in the slums. The main characters are siblings Daniel and Pearl, survivors of a slave revolt on the island of Jamaica in the 1760s. Daniel eventually works his way into being a decorated officer for the British Redcoats and is a veteran of the American Revolutionary War. He grows close to a white British Redcoat general and his wife, who become parental figures to Daniel and Pearl, and upon his death, the general bequeaths Daniel and Pearl his last name, as well as an inheritance that would have them set up for life. But when Daniel and Pearl arrive in London from America to take what is theirs, they run into a snag: The white army officer's brother refuses to give what is owed to them because they are Black. From there, the duo are thrown into the slums, where Daniel is forced into servitude for a crime-lord who runs St. Giles. Daniel has to find a way out of the precarious situation through the aid of a secret society of free Black men scheming to take back what they believe they are owed. The attention to detail and the research that went into this book make the setting come to life. The prose is beautiful and kinetic, propelling you from page to page, making this an easy read. Though slow at points, the pace extracts moments of tension from the relationships of the fully fleshed-out characters. If you can make it past the enraging opening portions of the book, you'll find a narrative that is as enthralling as it is devastating, as brutal as it is

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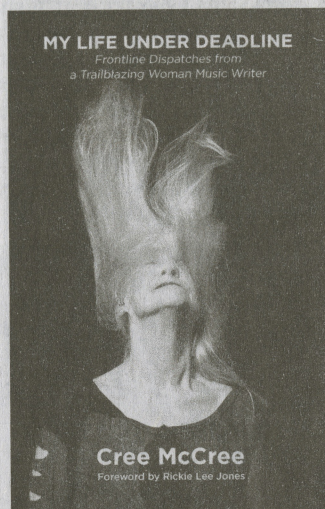
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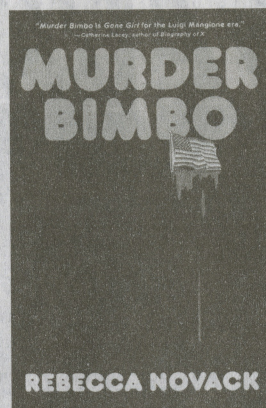
hopeful. The dichotomy makes it a worthwhile read, especially for those who love historical fiction and bingeable reads with heart. —*Danny Cherry Jr.*



**CREE MCCREE
MY LIFE UNDER DEADLINE
(RARE BIRD)**

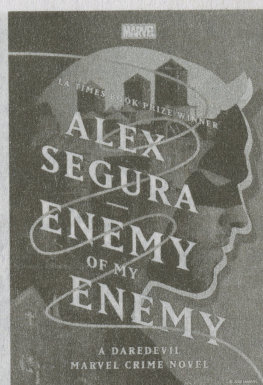
My Life Under Deadline celebrates veteran music writer Cree McCree's career thus far. This collection showcases decades of pieces that first appeared in publications ranging from *Spin* to *OffBeat*, covering big names (former Stones guitarist Mick Taylor, boogie king John Lee Hooker, and songsmith Rickie Lee Jones) alongside lesser-known names (local rockers Malevitus, Cajun punk band Bas Clas, and the shuttered New Orleans venue SideBar). *My Life Under Deadline* serves as a testament to the power of prose and personal perspective. Regardless of a subject's notoriety (or lack thereof), McCree always finds a unique angle through which to consider her muses, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the text regardless of if they've ever heard a single note from the profiled artist. McCree is the rare type of figure who was unafraid to hop into a van and follow Blues Traveler around the country in her mid-40s. That type of passion bleeds onto pages that have since circulated for decades. Perhaps McCree's biggest passion is for New Orleans and its rich musical culture. McCree covered local artists from afar during her time in New York and in their natural habitat after moving to the city she has called home for decades.

McCree has more than earned the right to describe her work, distilled in the book's subtitle, as "Frontline Dispatches from a Trailblazing Woman Music Writer." —*William Archambeault*



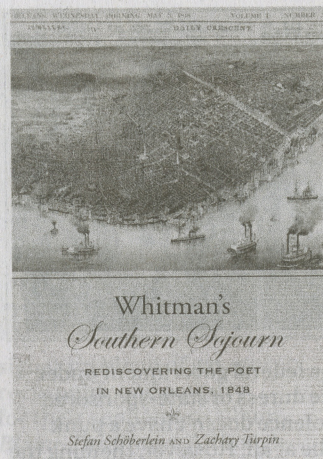
**REBECCA NOVACK
MURDER BIMBO
(AVID READER PRESS/
SIMON & SCHUSTER)**

Murder Bimbo is a semi-satirical thriller told from the perspective of a sex worker turned political assassin. She recounts killing a misogynistic rising star of right-wing U.S. politics she dubs "Meat Neck," and her collaborations with a white supremacist group infiltrated by a federal agent, three times: first to the host of a *You're Wrong About*-style podcast called *Justice for Bimbos*, signing emails with the pseudonym Murder Bimbo; then to an ex-girlfriend; and finally to the reader, changing her tone, background, and motivations each time. It's an interesting concept, and a fairly witty story told by an intriguing though highly unreliable narrator. But the novel feels flat overall. Characters other than the narrator are underdeveloped or presented in contradictory ways that make them hard to grasp, thanks to the multi-narrative approach. Though the plot on first blush feels ultracontemporary, author Rebecca Novack never provides any real detail about the novel's political ecosystem or the assassination's ramifications—it's not even clear if it's set precisely in our world. Ultimately, what's most memorable about *Murder Bimbo* may be the implicit notion that "ascending right-wing demagogue" is now essentially a stock character. —*Steven Melendez*



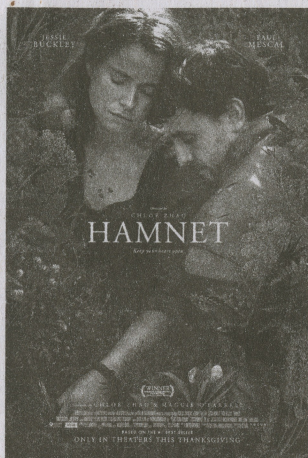
**ALEX SEGURA
ENEMY OF MY ENEMY: A
DAREDEVIL CRIME NOVEL
(HYPERION AVENUE)**

Enemy of my Enemy is a novel written about beloved street-level superhero Daredevil (a.k.a. Matthew Murdock), the red spandex-clad acrobatic crimefighter who defends Hell's Kitchen, armed with nothing but his escrima sticks. Oh, and his super senses: Daredevil is blind. Frank Castle/Punisher allegedly murders Daredevil's biggest nemesis and the city's crime lord, Wilson Fisk, a.k.a. Kingpin. In the process, Punisher kills a cop. But Daredevil isn't buying that story—Punisher doesn't kill cops. In his capacity as lawyer Matthew Murdock, he defends Punisher and loses business in the process, while in his capacity as Daredevil he tries to solve the mystery, sparking gang wars in the process that involve ninjas, cyborgs, superpowered crime lords, and more. Murdock contends with all of this while trying to maintain his sanity and a new relationship. Alex Segura, an award-winning crime writer, knew his shit when it came to depicting the messiness and complexity of Ol' Hornhead. He captures how Murdock's Catholicism conflicts with his propensity to violence, how being an officer of the court conflicts with his extrajudicial justice, and the way he struggles to keep it all together. This book would be loved best by those familiar with the world of Marvel, but no prior knowledge is needed. The book is entertaining, but a few of the twists wouldn't hold up to deep scrutiny. However, this isn't a book meant to be too closely scrutinized—it's a thrill ride, plain and simple. —*Danny Cherry Jr.*



**STEFAN SCHÖBERLEIN /
ZACHARY TURPIN
WHITMAN'S SOUTHERN
SOJOURN: REDISCOVERING
THE POET IN NEW
ORLEANS, 1848
(UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
PRESS)**

New Orleans history is replete with artists who briefly spent time in the city, leaving behind enough of a legend to keep the tour guides busy—Edgar Degas, William Faulkner, and Trent Reznor, to name a few. Add to that list a young Walt Whitman, who lived near Lafayette Square for a few months in 1848, writing and editing for a newspaper called the *Daily Crescent* before returning to his native New York. Whitman scholars Stefan Schöberlein (who previously edited a collection of Whitman's New Orleans-focused writings for LSU Press) and Zachary Turpin make that short stay fascinating while exploring underreported aspects of 1800s New Orleans and the journalism of that era, like informal postal links between newspapers that allowed for the sharing of reporting in a pre-wired period, and probing how New Orleans shaped Whitman's thoughts on issues like slavery. It's an engaging book that should appeal to anyone interested in New Orleans history, but much of Whitman's own New Orleans writing excerpted here has—through no fault of these authors—little to offer modern readers. Some of his cringey approaches to covering race, gender, and Crescent City life will be recognizable, though, down to his casual misspelling of "Techoupitoulas" Street. —*Steven Melendez*



HAMNET
DIR: CHLOÉ ZHAO
(FOCUS)

As the third-favorite for Best Picture according to FanDuel, *Hamnet* can find comfort in the fact it came out in a year where there are at least two more deserving films that are more entertaining and address societal concerns. It instead feels like more traditional Oscar bait: set in Tudor England, featuring dead children and high theatre. It's about the writing and debut of *Hamlet*, arguably the greatest play ever. This plays as the equivalent of Hollywood making a movie about making movies, which Academy voters traditionally love. Chloé Zhao shows she's a versatile director, going from her Oscar-winning minimalist *Nomadland* to a Marvel movie in *Eternals* to now this novel adaptation. Baby Hamlet In The Bardo pulls on heart strings and uses strange anachronistic surveillance camera angles to give us a glimpse into the homelife of a genius and his witchy wife. It's pretty in the rainy British countryside, Jessie Buckley's performance may resonate with parents everywhere, and there's Easter eggs for the Shakespeare fanboys and girls out there, but ultimately this movie reads like Shakespeare fanfic. It's fine, but it shouldn't be up for Best Picture—it's not even the Best Picture About A Mother Who Lost A Child from this year, thanks to *The Testament of Ann Lee*. —Carlos A. Molina



MAN ON THE RUN
DIR: MORGAN NEVILLE
(MPL / POLYGRAM ENTERTAINMENT)

When he left The Beatles to disappear into the Scottish countryside, Paul McCartney did not heed the adage: Never work with children or animals. Surrounded by sheep, dogs, chickens, and his own growing brood, McCartney set up shop with his photographer wife Linda and slipped into comparative obscurity. While theories of his death abounded in the press, he used this time to reflect on what it meant to "grow up" after his life changed beyond recognition. Morgan Neville's nearly two-hour documentary returns to this motif of growing up again and again—perhaps too frequently—but this emphasis is McCartney's own. Using words and music to present the narrative instead of traditional talking heads, this documentary is a collage of McCartney's life, featuring his own voice, the voices of close friends and family, and plenty of music. The voices speak about McCartney's time in the Beatles, but mostly about the aftermath. McCartney's legacy may have come from being part of the biggest band in the world, but the documentary asks a less considered question: "What next?" Paying close and deserved attention to his relationship with Linda, her successes as a photographer, and their collaborations together, this film is an intimate investigation into how an artist's identity can possibly be reformed after such colossal fame. —Eva Karl

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RAISING LOUISIANA

cont'd from pg. 13

needs your work to be just right, if you find there is a strange fulfillment in obsessing over the details of the final product, you're my people and that's OK, too. Embrace the slowness and fall in love with the process.

The Culmination

Last year, my band loucey released its first full-length record *participation trophy wife* via Strange Daisy Records. Its 11 tracks explore the very themes I was wrestling with in my return to writing: suburban melancholia, family legacy, societal expectations, personal identity. We played a handful of special shows, and it was named a top-five New Orleans release in 2025 by *ANTIGRAVITY*. This chapter was the culmination of many hours spent tinkering away with my closest collaborators, and I could not be more grateful.

As my husband/bandmate and I welcome our third child soon, I don't doubt that the art I love will be waiting for me, whenever I'm ready to return to it. It won't ever look the same. Then again, neither will I. But long live the passions that grow older with us, that we can't shake even if we try. May we be so lucky to tap into something so pure for all of our days. ♡



illustrations by Victoria Allen
@vs_illustration

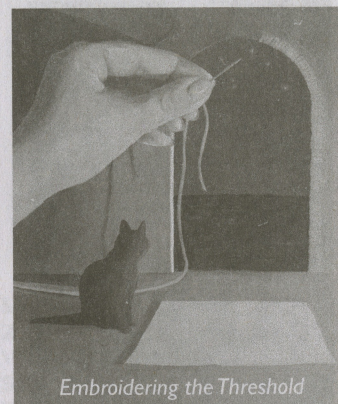
ART BRINE

cont'd from pg. 15

Systemic exclusion to resources is unethical and a widespread problem. But in language and art forms, what we don't know can be understood as an invitation. While English and painting are my first languages, I welcome a break from them.

My excitement about recognizing a corny nostalgic pop song led me to set down my task as an art writer and engage in a lively conversation with the artist about Eastern European aesthetic tendencies, like the impressive ratio of end table to tchotchke and doily. She poured me a cup of Romanian elderflower soft drink she had

procured for the opening and shared a memory of drinking it as a child in Romania, and I felt more deeply connected to the art, the artist. This too—to inquire, expand, and connect—is the point. ♡



Embroidering the Threshold

SOUND CHECK

cont'd from pg. 41

you're like, "I'm a genius. This is perfect," you're probably not very good. Usually I have to convince artists to "give up" on it—not exactly give up, but just let it go, let the recording out into the world and make a new one.

So, you mix live shows, record studio albums, and do a podcast?

I'll do any breadth of work with a microphone and speaker that people want to pay me for, so I record a podcast for a dude who played for the Saints and LSU, "the Honey Badger" [*In the Bayou With Tyrann Mathieu*]. I go to his huge mansion on the North Shore and record him talking for 90 minutes and then I dip. I do the sync of the audio [to the video], then I process the audio, then I send it off to editors.

Does editing out mouth sounds drive you insane?

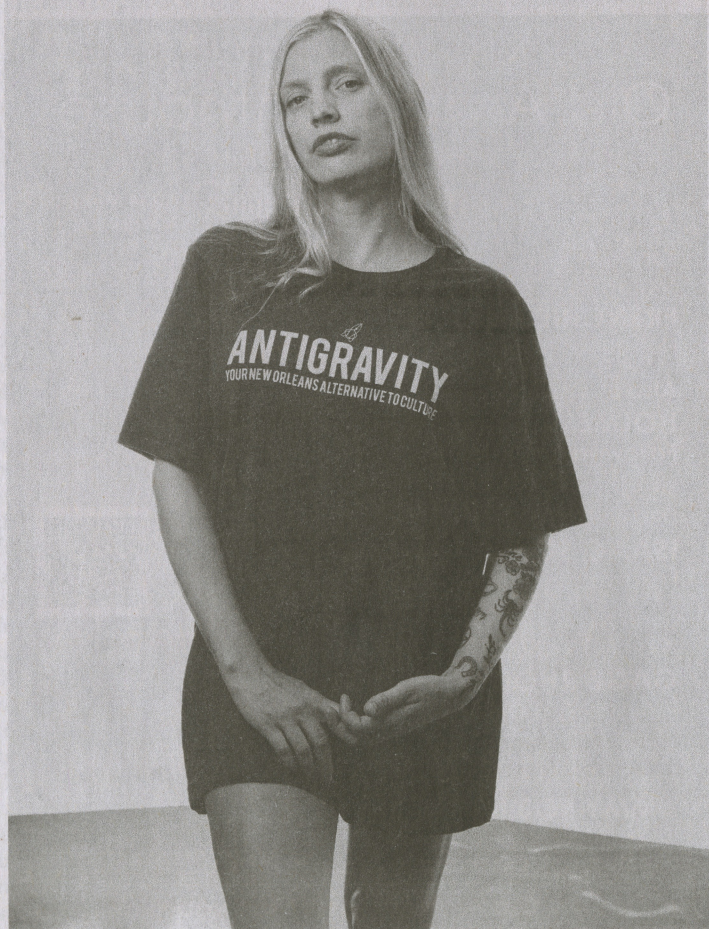
Not really. They have really sophisticated new ways of automating it which makes it really quick. There's literally a plugin called de-mouth click [Mouth De-click]. In Pro Tools, on my plugin search, if I type in "De—" there's, like, 17 plugins. The tools I use are available in any DAW. It's just the iZotope RX series. The RX series is fantastic. Go look up NoiseWorks' VoiceAssist. DynAssist. I think it's Pro Tools only and, say you take a vocal, right click the vocal, enable DynAssist, and it will

automatically ride the vocal level to be perfectly the same vocal level on every word, not dissimilar to how a compressor would, but it doesn't impart the sound of compression on it. And then the newer one, VoiceAssist, this one isn't a plugin, it actually looks at the whole file. It's ARA [Audio Random Access] processing, so I think it's in Pro Tools and Cubase, but they'll also do things like automatically gate it, deal with sibilance, deal with breaths, and then it will also kill the room tone. Say, for this recording, it would take out the background sound of the dishwasher without affecting the quality or the clarity.

So it's like the equivalent of photoshopping out something you don't want in the background of a photo?

Yes, perfectly. So I'll record live shows, multitracks, and offer to give people mixes of their shows and I don't charge them what I would charge them to mix 10 songs because that would be a lot of money, so tools like that help me perfectly level and gate and de-ess an hour-long vocal with this tool, and then get to mixing. So like, for an hour-long show, I'll use DynAssist on bass and have it perfectly level the bass for me and then I've got the basis to start mixing it, to do creative and tone shaping things after the dynamics are taken care of. Ninety percent of the time, when something doesn't sound good in your mix, it just needs to be turned up or down. ♡

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MY SPILT MILK

COM

Folk AI

by Alex Rawls

Commercials during the Super Bowl presented one vision of artificial intelligence (AI). The Genspark ad gave us AI as a tool that could speed up the cubicle warriors' productivity so they could get back to managing their fantasy football teams and shopping on Etsy more quickly. The redundancy in the cubicle farm in the commercial makes it obvious that in real life a downsizing would soon follow, but the commercial sold the fantasy that a better work life is only a prompt away.

This past January, a Folk Alliance International conference panel saw AI as the problem, not the solution. Folk Alliance is the annual meeting of the folk music industry, and the panelists generally concluded that AI was bad. The conversation was muddled, and it was often hard to hear agency or motivations in the analysis. Who was doing what and why with AI was hard to nail down, but everything it and "they" were doing was wrong. "I don't see the point," artist manager Blair Clark added with a hint of exasperation.

Charles Alexander, CEO of ViNIL, tried to reassure Clark and the panel. "We're at the Pleistocene Era" of AI development, he said, and argued that technology will catch up to AI and counter its more nefarious uses. That's part of what his company and the streaming platform Deezer do. Many of the weapons already exist to help us deal with AI, he implied, if people only bothered to use them.

The AI conversation is really a discussion of a tool, and many of the questions center on how it's used. American capitalism in the 21st century doesn't give us much cause for optimism, and the Super Bowl ads were so rosy in the future they foretold that you couldn't help but be suspicious. The amorphous anxiety in the Folk Alliance panel suggested that our collective discussion of AI needs more nuance and specificity.

At Folk Alliance, Blair Clark's objection made sense. In the folk music world where songs are perceived as an extension of the artist, individuality is the coin of the realm, and anything that mutes it diminishes a song's appeal. Sabrina Short of NOLAvate Black talked about her experiences working with Loyola music students who didn't use AI as a creative shortcut and only employed it to speed up non-creative processes. The anxiety in the room about AI music was too jacked for such a caveat, and the conversation continued as if it had never been said. The concern that AI fabrications will replace songs by living, breathing artists makes particular sense at Folk Alliance, where the financial margins for folk music have always been rough and have only gotten worse. Every potential hit to the income stream, no matter how small, inflicts financial and emotional damage.

But if fans of folk music genuinely choose AI folk over an actual person's song, the artists need to check themselves. What's happening with your

music when people, given the choice between generic, pre-fab songs and musicians' IRL creations, pick the AI song? Is it possible that some musicians offer too many secondhand thoughts, phrases, and melodies to be clearly more interesting? Or that AI-generated song structures and instrumentation catch the listener's attention better than a rehash of conventional chord progressions?

Is it also possible that we overrate the listener? We like to think audiences recognize, love, and validate authenticity, but the success of contemporary country music says we're being very kind. We like the idea that there are a lot of people out there ready for our nuanced breakdown of [insert topic here], but the fact that seven-inch singles historically outsold albums suggests that

the Costs of the Perfect Playlist, drills into the company's transition into Muzak 2.0 and the changes that came with that focus. Analyst Sam Taylor summarized Spotify's Q4 2025 report, writing, "For Spotify, AI is as big an opportunity as the internet or the smartphone and, from where Spotify sits, AI generated music isn't necessarily a problem, because the more content there is out there, the more important it is for a platform like Spotify to surface the right content to the right people at the right time."

Algorithmically curated playlists that match moods, activities, and times of day have become the platform's moneymakers, and they are often consumed passively. Listeners hearing music through Spotify playlists are more likely to experience it inattentively, which makes it less likely that consumers will

If there's a way forward, it may be for artists to strive to be as boldly individual as possible. To write songs that only they could write. To steer away from even casually familiar turns of phrase and observations others have made. To mine their own perspectives hard.

more people have preferred the simple pleasures of pop songs they can sing and dance to over the deep dive that an album cut represents.

We like to think of the song as the place where the artist and listener come together, and it's a connection listeners choose to make. I wonder if too often that relationship is part of a speed-dating event curated by Spotify, and listeners are letting the platform's playlists choose their music for them.

The place where we most often see human folk competing with AI folk is on Spotify, where an estimated 25% of the music is AI-generated. If listeners choose to let an untrustworthy platform pick their folk for them, that's on them, even if human artists suffer for their slack. Spotify began by marketing itself as the world's largest record collection, but Liz Pelly's book, *Mood Machine: The Rise of Spotify and*

notice the difference between human and AI product, much less have a preference.

If there's a way forward, it may be for artists to strive to be as boldly individual as possible. To write songs that only they could write. To steer away from even casually familiar turns of phrase and observations others have made. To mine their own perspectives hard. The commercial marketplace will almost certainly become more muddled and less financially sustaining, but folk music has always spoken to eclectic communities, maybe micro-communities. The economics of that are no better now than they ever were, but that means there's also less to lose by going all in on your own vision.

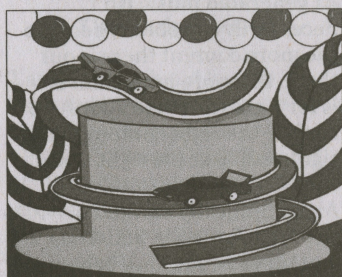
For more Alex Rawls musings, check out myspiltmilk.com and [@myspiltmilk](https://twitter.com/myspiltmilk).



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

compiled by ANTIGRAVITY staff

Aren't you tired of swiping in the hopes of running into a specific someone you have an existing, lingering curiosity about? Here's your chance to be brave—to take the active route instead of the passive one. Let's connect again. (Entries may be minimally edited for clarity.)



Hot Wheels Fan

Last Mardi Gras, the highlight of the day was when you tapped me on the shoulder and told me your son wanted to take a picture with me. I was dressed as a Hot Wheels race track. I kneeled down next to him, showed him the car that raced around the track on my hat when I tilted my head, and gave him a Hot Wheels car after the picture. This year I'll have a big racecar head piece, and I hope you'll find me for another picture.

Shrimply Delightful at Slow Down

We met at Slow Down and talked about our tiny dogs (Sardine & Prissy) and complimented each other's outfits. You were thrilled to hear about my cocktail shrimp Mardi Gras Day look, I was delighted you had one of my fav Nooworks patterns on. I was locked into hunting down costumes accoutrements and regrettably, did not get your name or contact information. We should have a dog picnic or dress up in silly little outfits for a cocktail or kiss?? Dealer's choice! **Follow-Up:** *Through kismet/luck/serendipity, I found the person!!*

Bark bark bark!

We howled together at the Wit's End Bad Puppy parade. I had Dalmatian ears and most of my ass out, you wore an oversized "No Gods No Masters" Scrim tee off the shoulder. Am I barking up the wrong tree?

Cleopatra Fanny Pack

Dyke with the gold Cleopatra fanny pack: I was dressed as Joan of Arc at Diva Day and you complimented my outfit. I wanted to give my number, but my hands were full with the sword. I've regretted it every day since.

Ultraviolence on Frenchmen

Opposite The Spotted Cat you paraded by in your immaculate bean-studded *A Clockwork Orange* costume. I casually expressed my appreciation which you accepted with grace, at which point my brain

broke down because I wanted to speak to you more but the only idea that came to mind was to call you "Alex DeLegume." And so in a minor panic I just applauded you as you started walking away. Your response to this was to rush and body check me, with enchantingly ferocious eyes over a satyr's grin, while you yelled "You wanna start some shit?!" in my face. I was absolutely smitten in that moment, and if I'd had maybe a couple more drinks in me I might have tried to catch up to you to at least try to meet you and learn your name, if not drop to my knees and offer to wreck my entire life for you. I sit now in regret for my callowness and relative sobriety, as being randomly assaulted by you might have been the highlight of my very first Mardi Gras. You are easily the most fascinating and alluring of all the wonderful people I've seen this Carnival, including the girl who was standing a few feet away from me with a rubber fish sticking out of her ass.

Honk If You Love Trepanning (Follow-Up)

To my delight, I was mentioned in [February's] Close Encounters. I have a bumper sticker that says "Honk If You Love Trepanning." I fondly remember your honking! Once I realized you weren't angry with me for a traffic violation, I was tickled pink by your vigorous thumbs up. It made my afternoon! I would love to be friends with a fellow trepanation enthusiast! If they are open to it, I am happy to share my email, phone number, social media, etc. I have attached a photo of said bumper sticker to verify my identity. Please let me know! *[This original submission was submitted anonymously, so please get in touch if you would like to be connected. -Ed.]*

Submit your own close encounter to closeencounters@antigravitiymagazine.com or through our new ANONYMOUS Google form (via QR code below). All email addresses will remain confidential. Don't be a creep.



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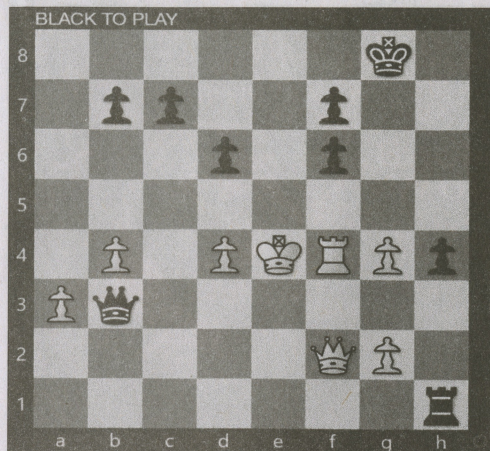
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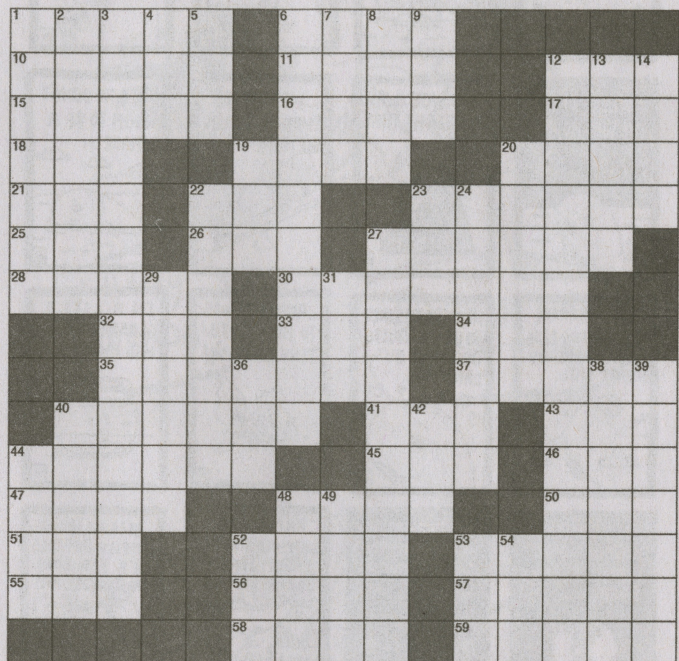
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- ACROSS**

 - 1 Bowtie, for one
 - 6 Units of 12A
 - 10 "I would leave a fiver"
 - 11 Employ
 - 12 See 6A
 - 15 Earth part
 - 16 Energetic start
 - 17 "___ see"
 - 18 Soul maker
 - 19 Singer James
 - 20 Sex type
 - 21 Italian isle (abbr.)
 - 22 "I need not hear more."
 - 23 Famous starter set
 - 25 Woody Allen role?
 - 26 Balloon tie off?
 - 27 Ish
 - 28 Count
 - 30 Homer's roll?
 - 32 Computer part
 - 33 Randy Orton move
 - 34 Blasting letters
 - 35 ___ g (watches)

- 37 Possible Instagram bio opener?
 - 40 Destination in 12D
 - 41 Math rock band
 - 43 Period
 - 44 Mint things
 - 45 "Haha"
 - 46 Horror movie from 2007
 - 47 Type of electric light
 - 48 "Gross"
 - 50 Two Hearted, for one
 - 51 1101
 - 52 LA pit name
 - 53 Possible hotel room
 - 55 Tuna sort
 - 56 Old ___ Coffee shop
 - 57 Goth writer, to his friends
 - 58 Defeats
 - 59 Re-juice, like for a turkey

- 3 *Michael J. Fox film
 - 4 Appears to be
 - 5 Fitting
 - 6 *Gunter Grass book
 - 7 Isn't
 - 8 Tar in Spain
 - 9 To be in Spain
 - 12 *Popular fantasy series
 - 13 WWII acronym
 - 14 Hot papa slangily
 - 19 Comedian Phillips
 - 20 Word with high
 - 22 Place to buy a slinky
 - 23 Dial up provider
 - 24 Spot next to a saloon in a western?
 - 27 Little hints... and what the starred clues feature
 - 29 Rich
 - 31 "Sure"
 - 36 Parade from the last crossword
 - 38 ...This is not a drill
 - 39 Haunting
 - 40 Often piled thing
 - 42 Firework show sound
 - 44 Iwo ___
 - 48 Expressive feature
 - 49 Slant
 - 52 "Chill"
 - 53 The beak of a bird or tortoise
 - 54 Hurricane ___

DOWN

- 1 Handles a pimple poorly
- 2 Supermodel Lima



for ANSWERS @leograuf
check INSTA @antigravmag

QOMIX

BY CAESAR MEADOWS



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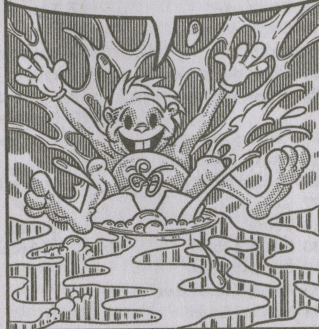
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Shoney on the Porch

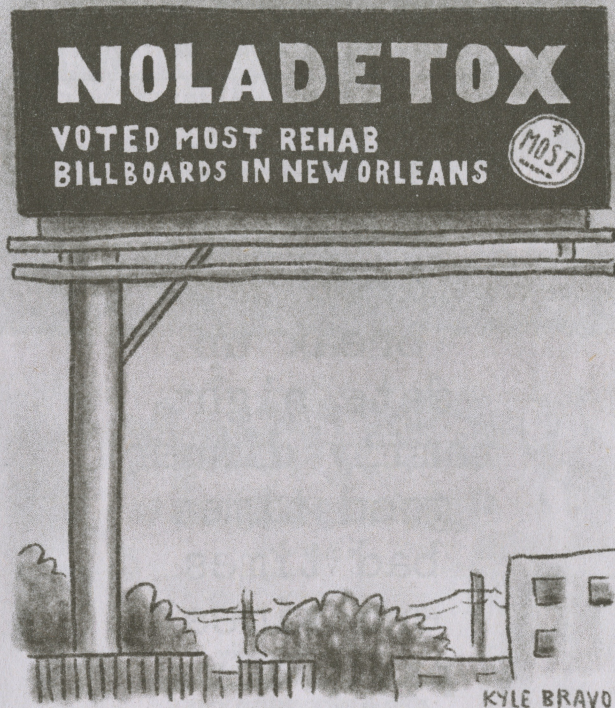
Shoney stood on the porch in overalls.
She was drinking coffee from a pickle jar,
and I couldn't help but imagine the taste of dill
when she sipped it.

Later that night we celebrated a birthday.
Her fiancé got drunk and puked in the driveway.
We were singing "Happy Birthday" while it happened,
and you could hear Shoney say:

God damnit.

They're getting wed in October.
I thought about that because Mazzy Star was playing.
I wonder if Shoney will wear a pantsuit to their wedding.
She'd hate to hear me say that.

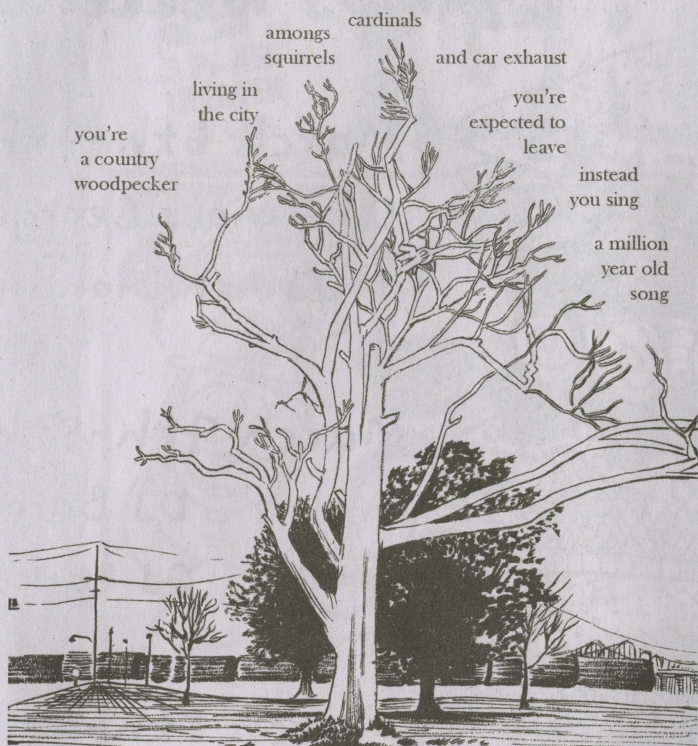
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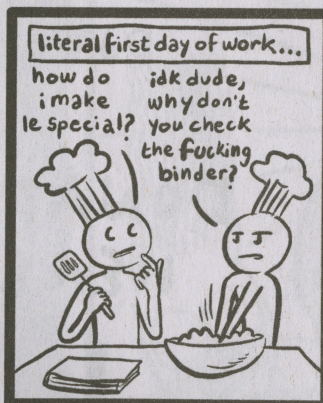
The K CHRONICLES



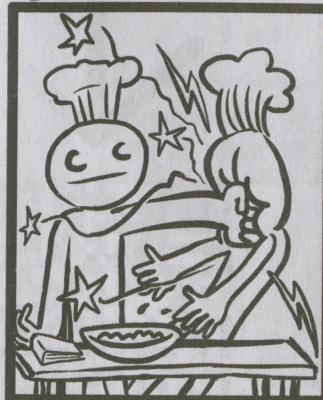


Hugo Martinez

algoenespanol@gmail.com Insta: @hugom_art_inez



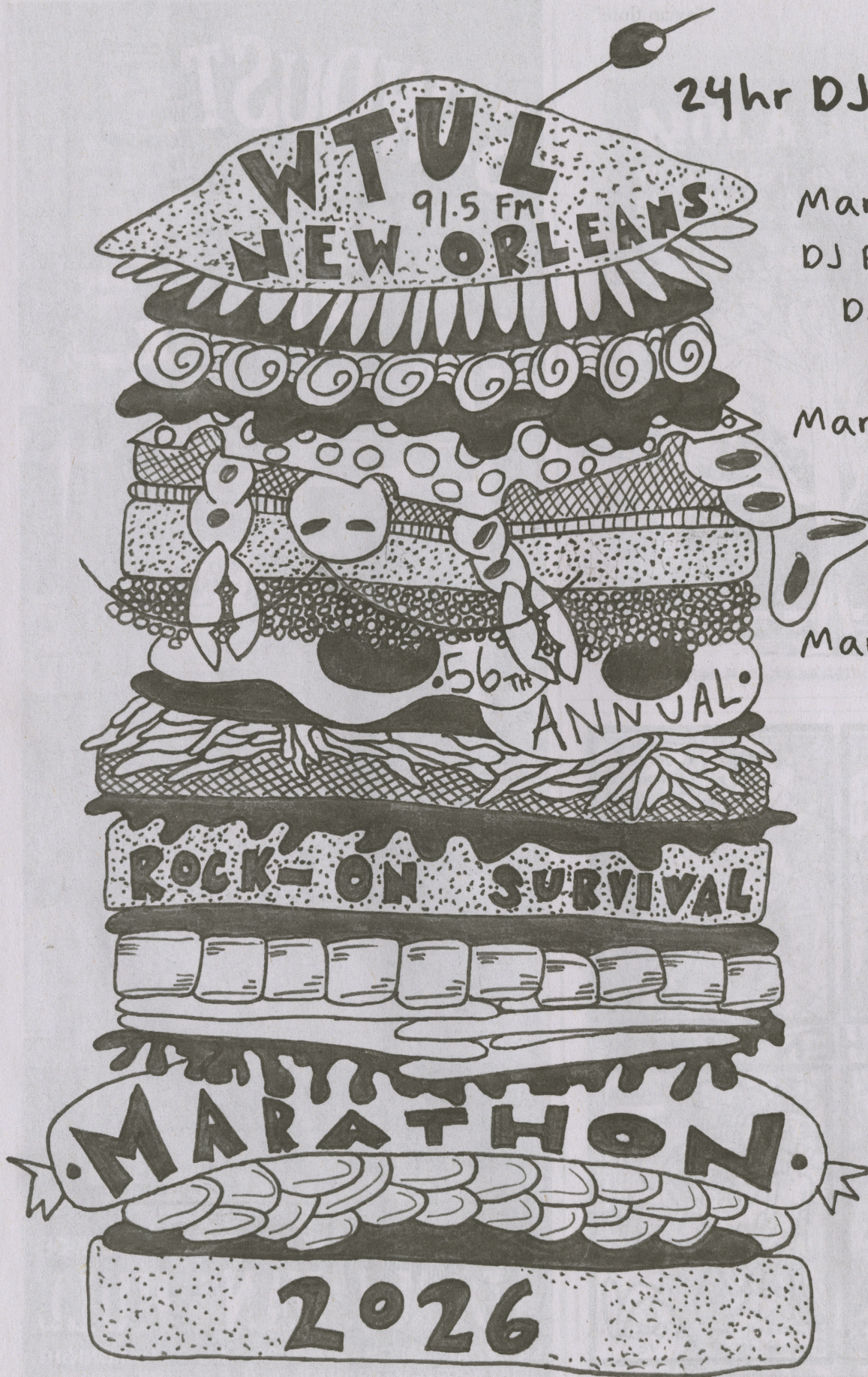
DA KITCHEN "AFTER THE STAHT"



by Romey Petite

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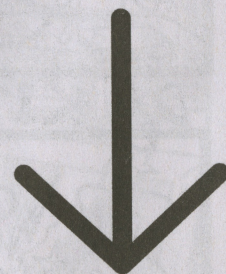
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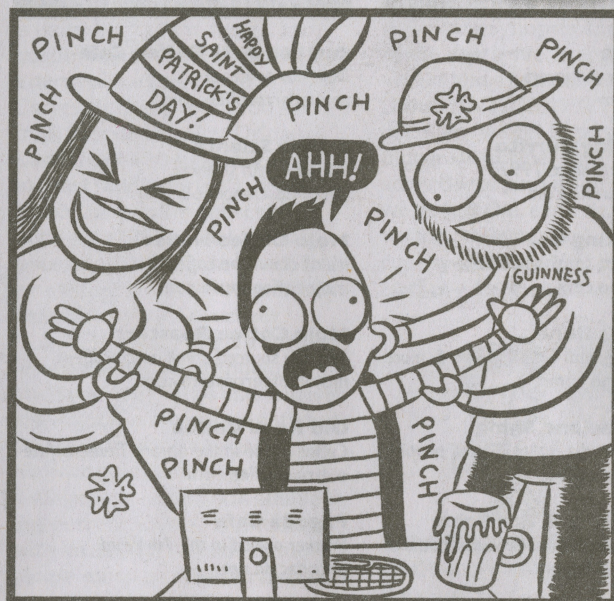
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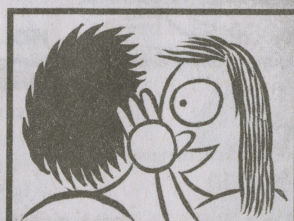
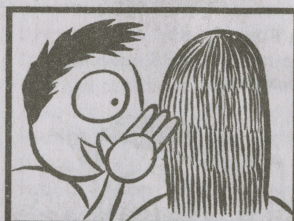
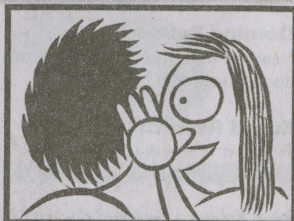
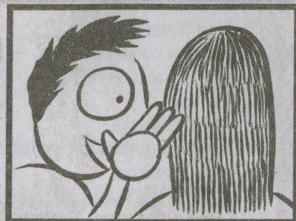
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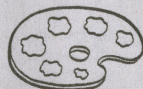
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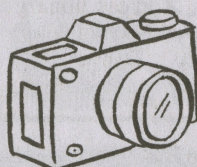
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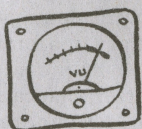
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2. BUY A SUBSCRIPTION AND/OR SOME MERCH

You can go two different ways on our Big Cartel site (antigravitymagazine.bigcartel.com), either by signing up for 12 issues or using the "subscribe" option, where anything over \$5 gets you a monthly copy mailed automatically until you cancel or we stop publishing. The "subscribe" option is also good for those of you who have asked to donate to the mag but want to skip the mailed issue—just please specify that when you sign up. And of course we have t-shirts, totes, hats, and other fun stuff to rep your favorite rag.

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We made this easy. Look left to our Advertiser Directory, a distinguished list comprised mostly of small businesses that could use your dollar as much as we could. Engage with these businesses—spend your buck there, of course, but follow them on social media and such, and let them know you appreciate their investment in community-funded media.

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Anything and everything helps. We appreciate you, and we look forward to sticking around a little bit longer. ✨





Justice can see you—if not right through you—and she is going to ask you to back up your claims. Her scales do not measure the quality of souls, only the weight of wrong action. Her appearance means reckoning and she has no use for flawed theories about who deserves to have their grievances handled first. Justice says: *Every injustice is the precise injustice that must be addressed immediately.* Speak aloud to Justice, ask her questions, listen to her answers, because she did not forget that what is fundamentally right will necessarily create the most potent and satisfying societies. The exploitation necessary to maintain imperial power can and will be noticed in the most mundane of tasks and interactions. We can expect to confront the flaws in every system of relationship we participate in. Emotional overstimulation is a tactic of oppression in this semi-automated class war. It works to shut some people down and send others into outbursts

too random to amount to political change. If you wish to move someone through these oceans of overwhelm, assess where their shame lies and find the sorrow that bedrocks it. Connect to that sorrow and keep it company, because sorrow will act on its own convictions whereas shame will always run for cover.

If you wish to move someone through these oceans of overwhelm, assess where their shame lies and find the sorrow that bedrocks it.

The Nine of Swords is your steward through *the long dark night of the soul*. This card marks a period of time spent with one's own guilt and regret—or the lack of meaning inherent in acts of abuse. Hours spent despairing can create more despair far too easily, but the Nine of Swords has a plan. She points out that we keep a collection of psychological oddities: bits of conversations,

flashes of something that may or may not have happened, a string of random slights ordered so perfectly they must mean something. *But*, she says, *they are all only phantoms.* We can and must act as witness to our own experiences, feelings, and beliefs if we are to break the habit of cycling over and over through events of the past that

will not resolve. The Nine of Swords teaches us to accept what is our own even if it hurts, and to allow for shapeshifting memories to remain with the night. The Nine of Swords stays with us, always, until our own private dawn breaks over the horizon and we move on.

The Knight of Cups might explore miles off from her path just to chase down a whim,

or she might choose to go to another place on the map altogether. Should you take her as flighty or unserious, however, you will never learn the secrets of her longevity. The Knight of Cups avoids traps with her slow stride and her long attention span. When the Knight of Cups is sending dandelion seeds into the wind, consider which way they blow because she has her reasons for laying low. We must listen to our instincts and give ourselves the respect we deserve. If the Knight of Cups finds out the most dangerous person she knows is looking for her in the next town, she stops, sets up camp, and reads a big book until her absence forces her adversary to move on. She values active imagining—it is the reason she has the patience to wait anyone out. Playfulness and self-compassion will always frustrate and confuse the mind of the dominator. See the Knight of Cups for who she really is and slip the trap of telling yourself that care will always fail. May our dreaming restore us. ♠

One Page at a Time

*A Reading and Writing Workshop with
Tulane University's Great Writers Series*



AT THE LIBRARY:

One Page at a Time with Professor Kate Baldwin

In this workshop based on George Saunders' *A Swim in a Pond in The Rain*, participants will analyze Saunders' work, followed by targeted writing prompts. All readers and writers welcome.

Wednesday, March 11, 11am–12pm

Milton H. Latter Memorial Library
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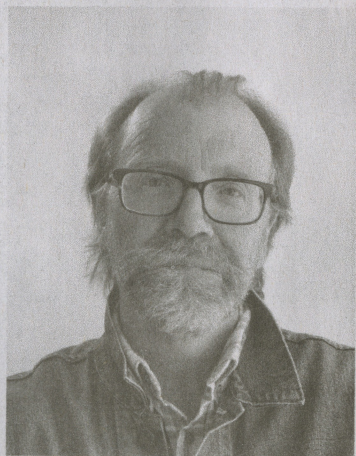


Photo credit: Zach Krahmer

AT TULANE UNIVERSITY:

George Saunders Author Talk

A public talk focused on Saunders' new novel *Vigil*.

Thursday, April 9, 6pm

Lavin-Bernick Center



TULANE
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